Radiance

A Forum for Kriya Yoga Initiates

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The Eternal Way

THE INNER MEANING OF THE BHAGAVAD GITA

After Arjuna, the devotee, understands that self-pity and irrational thinking are not helpful to the spiritual growth process, the acquisition of valid knowledge that illumines one's path is possible. In this article, an examination of the esoteric meaning of the opening chapters of the *Bhagavad Gita* continues, as Krishna (the soul's innate intelligence) begins to reveal the way to peace of mind and flawless perception.

Dialogue

PHILOSOPHY, TRADITIONS & PRACTICES

An open discussion with initiates in response to questions and inquiries. Regular reader participation is encouraged.

Addendum

ARE WE HONESTLY DEDICATED?

Become more wholeheartedly attentive to your spiritual practices and more intentionally involved with worthwhile purposes that bless everyone. Awaken to an expanded vision of possibilities which await your acknowledgement and acceptance. Let go and let God express through and as you.

The mind is conditioned to think that defining a thing is the same as understanding it. No definition can ever contain the totality of God.

– Paramahansa Yogananda –

SRF Announces Spring Publication of Paramahansa Yogananda's Commentary on *The Bhagavad Gita*

It is with happiness that I share with you the good news that *God Talks With Arjuna*, Master's commentary on the *The Bhagavad Gita* completed in late 1951, will be published in a two-volume edition during the spring of this year. Self-Realization Fellowship recently published announcements about the project to potential readers, bookstore managers, and book distributors. The exact date for release, and the price, will be announced soon. You may check with your local book dealer or await further news from us. We will notify our readers as soon as we know when the book will be ready for distribution.

There are at least three good reasons for ordering your copy of Master's *Gita* when it becomes available: 1) You will want to have access to the information; 2) it will be the first edition, therefore unique; 3) if you wait too long, the first edition will sell out quickly and you will have to wait for the second printing. This happened in 1994 with the first printing of *Wine of the Mystic*, Master's commentary on The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam. (*Note*: This year also marks the 50th anniversary of the publication of *Autobiography of a Yogi*, and SRF has plans for extensive publicity for it along with their forthcoming edition of *The Bhagavad Gita*.) Tell all your spiritual friends about *God Talks With Arjuna*.

I will continue with my work on the *Gita* and endeavor to have it ready for publication next fall or winter. I would not publish it this spring because to do so would not be respectful of SRF's current endeavors. Master's book deserves to receive the full attention of potential readers and of booksellers for the next several months, and I support the project.

CHAPTER ONE OF THE BHAGAVAD GITA

The Yoga of the Despondency of Arjuna

In the previous issue of *Radiance* we examined the background of the *Gita* story, became acquainted with some of the characters and learned the meanings of their Sanskrit names, and examined the opening verses of the first chapter. It will be helpful to review that material to refresh your memory as to the symbolism of the impending battle: that it is really a story of every devotee's overcoming of obstacles to spiritual growth and facilitating awakening to higher understanding.

Sanjaya said:

24. Thus directed by Arjuna, Krishna, driving the most magnificent chariot, placed it between the two armies.

In response to the soul's urge to clearly perceive the facts of conditions as they are, innate knowledge along with intuition unfolds to enable the devotee to examine both sides of the situation. Krishna represents the indwelling spirit of God which controls the five senses (symbolized by the white horses yoked to the chariot of individual life). Life regulated by intelligence is indeed magnificent, endowed with virtually unlimited possibilities for expression and for unfolding qualities and powers usually unknown to the average person.

25. In front of Bhishma, Drona, and all the other leaders, Krishna said: Arjuna, behold these Kurus here assembled.

Distinct from cosmic individuality (Bhishma), the actions which contribute to transformational experiences (Drona), and the various other influential characteristics of mundane spheres, knowledge and intuition enables the devotee to be aware of all obstacles to spiritual

growth and the tendencies which support them, as well as to apprehend the soul's innate, constructive life-enhancing qualities. In the *Gita* story, the cousins on both sides of the contest are all members of the Kuru clan descended from common ancestors, just as individuals have psychological and spiritual characteristics all derived from common causes. Egoism is the progenitor of the self-conscious condition with its diverse characteristics, and God's consciousness is the origin of souls and their characteristics. Yet, even the effects of egoism are apparent because of the influences of consciousness expressing through clouded awareness and the conditioned mind.

26. Arjuna saw fathers, grandfathers, teachers, maternal uncles, brothers, sons, grandsons, and their friends standing there.

The devotee then sees all of the psychological characteristics and their influential tendencies: personality traits formed due to egoism, habit, and experience; memories; self-centered desires; attachments; envy; jealousy; fear; insecurity; possessiveness; unbridled passion; addictive tendencies; and others supportive of them.

27. He saw fathers-in-law and companions in both armies. When he saw all these kinsmen thus arrayed,
28. Overcome with pity and sadness, impelled by excessive compassion, Arjuna said: O Krishna, having seen my own kinsman desiring to fight,
29. My limbs grow limp, my mouth becomes dry, my body trembles, and my hair stands on end.
30. My bow slips from my hand, my skin burns as with fever; I am unable to stand firm, my mind wavers.

When the devotee becomes simultaneously aware of the characteristics and influential tendencies of the self-conscious (egocentric) condition and of the innate soul qualities and capacities, and understands that because they are often in opposition the self-conscious characteristics will have to be eliminated or transformed, lethargy and despair may be experienced. The challenge may seem awesome, and attachment to personality traits may cause excessive, unreasoned compassion to be expressed as blind, emotion-based sentiment. One may become emotionally upset and feel weak, insecure, and afraid. A self-conscious person may have become so accustomed to personality-based views and circumstances that the very thought

of having to modify attitudes, psychological traits, and behaviors may represent a formidable challenge even though aspiration to spiritual growth is present.

Arjuna's bow, of which his hand lets go, represents the "weapon" of firm resolve and will-to-accomplish without which neither meditative concentration nor purposeful living are possible. The weak-willed devotee is unstable because the mind is dominated by restlessness and confusion. What is needed is improved understanding, alert curiosity about the possibilities of discovering higher realities, and undiminished aspiration to spiritually awaken.

31. I perceive omens of misfortune, O Krishna; nor can I see any good resulting from the slaying of my kinsman in battle.
32. I do not desire victory, nor royal status, nor pleasures. What is the value of such kingship (mastery) to us, or enjoyment, or life itself?

When the devotee's reason is overcome with emotion, rational thinking is almost impossible. One may speculate about the challenges that lie ahead and predict difficulties. Clouded intelligence and attempts at self-justification for the purpose of preserving existing circumstances may cause one to assert that eliminating even discomforting psychological characteristics is wrong; that no good can come of it. It may seem that without the companionship of thoughts, feelings, opinions, and viewpoints which have become habitual, life is not worth living. Hence, Arjuna is portrayed as saying that he cannot see any worthwhile outcome by going ahead with the contest. The higher life which can be realized by application of knowledge cannot be apprehended by the devotee whose mind is overcome with conflict and heaviness (*tamas guna*). Arjuna's words reveal but a limited view of life and its possibilities, as he will be soon informed.

33. Those for whose sake we desire rulership, enjoyments, and pleasures, they are arrayed here before us, having renounced their lives and their riches.
34. Teachers, fathers, sons, and also grandfathers, maternal uncles, fathers-in-law, grandsons, brothers-in-law, and others who are related.
35. Though they are intent upon killing me, I do not desire to kill them, not even for sovereignty of the three worlds; how much less then for the earth?

36. What happiness can we have by striking down the sons of Dhritarashtra, O Krishna? Having thus banished these aggressors, misfortune would be our lot.
37. Therefore it is not right for us to kill our kinsmen, the sons of Dhritarashtra. Having done so, how could we be happy, O Krishna?
38. Even if those whose thoughts are overpowered by greed do not see the wrong caused by the destruction of the family or the crime of treachery to friends,
39. Why should we not have the power of discernment to see the unwisdom of destruction of the family and turn away from this contest?

As is characteristic of one who is depressed, emotional, and somewhat irrational, Arjuna continues to argue on behalf of his point of view. The devotee at this stage is still attached to the human, conditioned status and wants to defend it. Addressing his own higher consciousness (Krishna), Arjuna naively states, "It is not right for us to do away with the offspring (the sons or products)) of blind mind (*Dhritarashtra*). The devotee is fully aware of the existence of nonuseful, and even harmful, psychological tendencies but cannot exercise enough power of soul-will to directly confront and dominate them. The problem is twofold: complacency (intellectual laziness), and passivity. One in this confused state of mind may mistakenly think that some arrangement can be worked out whereby negative, destructive conditions can coexist with positive, constructive conditions.

40. With the destruction of the family the ancient laws are destroyed. When the laws perish, the entire family goes to ruin.
41. When lawlessness increases, O Krishna, the women of the family become corrupt; when women are corrupted, confusion of duties occurs.
42. Confusion brings conflict and disorder to both the family and the destroyers of the family; no longer nourished, the ancestors of the family also suffer.
43. By the misdeeds of those who destroy the family and create confusion, the timeless laws which sustain life are destroyed.
44. We have often heard, O Krishna, that those whose family laws have been done away with, dwell in a condition of continual misfortune.

The devotee erroneously believes that when the "family" of sense desires and urges are quieted during contemplative meditation as the result of internalizing attention, or intentionally regulated in the course of everyday circumstances, the governing influences that

make desires possible may be permanently vanquished. This is not true, of course, but the idea provides an excuse for a superficially motivated devotee to avoid spiritual practices. The aimless fear is that when sense urges are regulated, their functions will be disorganized and the capacity for feeling (referred to here as a feminine characteristic) will be disturbed, causing confusion that creates conflict and disorder to both the host of desires and to the field of individualized consciousness in which they find expression. One at this stage, lacking higher knowledge, does not know that rational control of physical and mental urges removes destructive drives, constructively modifies habitual behavior, conserves vital forces, strengthens mental powers, and purifies both mind and senses so that life can be more enjoyable.

The subtle sense faculties, the subjective, true essences (*tattvas*) or root-causes of the physical sense faculties which make possible sight, hearing, seeing, touching, and smelling in the objective realm, are nurtured by intelligence and by experiencing refined perceptions. The senses become used to gross perceptions and sensations when allowed to be overly used to gratify unregulated physical desires. When one allows strong emotion and desire for feeling-sensation to determine desires, problems can arise. Desires should be regulated by the (so-called) masculine characteristics of inclination to purposeful accomplishment and productive, creative expression. Even when meditating, desire for novel perceptions or for serene or blissful states which are pleasant to experience but are not accompanied by insight or expansion of soul awareness, should be transformed into pure aspiration for Self-knowledge and God-realization.

The "ancestors" of desires are egoism (the false sense of independent existence) and the soul. If egoism is not nourished by attention, it fades—a spiritually beneficial outcome for a devotee of God. If the soul nature is not nourished by Self-remembrance, prayer, devotion, meditation, and superconscious perceptions, its awareness tends to overly identify with mental transformations, changes, and objective circumstances.

The "timeless laws" which sustain life are the principles of causation which support the orderly processes of evolution. If their actions are unable to be harmoniously expressive, orderly unfoldment of both the natural processes which make life worthwhile and of spiritual growth is impeded. The mistaken notion that disciplined

regulation of impulses and actions characteristic of unenlightened consciousness might produce unfavorable results is unfounded. The conditioned personality will certainly be challenged and transformed, but the benefit will be that of providing ideal circumstances for progressive soul unfoldment. In Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* (2:1), the first requirement for a devotee on the Kriya Yoga path is that of intentionally regulating physical and mental impulses. Self-discipline is a prerequisite to mastering behaviors, mental states, and states of consciousness. A God-surrendered yogi does not waste time and energy in idle daydreaming, irrational talk, or useless action of any kind, but concentrates attention on matters essential to facilitating psychological transformation and authentic spiritual growth.

45. Alas! We are resolved to perform unrighteously because we are willing to slay our own kinsmen because of greed for our own happiness.

A devotee is sometimes so confused that self-conscious awareness, with its delusions, illusions, and rigid psychological characteristics, is considered to be not only normal but ideal—thus, a spiritually unawake soul sometimes prefers the darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge, and will often actively resist any change that might disturb its habit-bound routine of thoughts, moods, relationships, and behaviors. Such a one may even assert that it is wrong, because it appears greedily self-serving to do so, to go against the tide of conditioned human nature; that to desire higher knowledge and spiritual freedom is a selfish aspiration.

46. I would therefore be happier if the sons of Dhritarashtra, armed with their weapons, should slay me, unresisting and weaponless.

The devotee overwhelmed by mental conflict, emotionally depressed, deficient in aspiration and will-to-accomplish, and awed by the seeming immensity of the transformational process to be undergone, may be temporarily resigned to a fate of passive acquiescence to the perverse tendencies and drives (weapons) of the unenlightened mind (*Dhritarashtra*). At a deeper level, however, one knows that unconsciousness and suppression of innate soul qualities will not be a permanent condition—that one will eventually have to confront the obstacles that inhibit the unfoldment of true knowl-

edge and either intentionally banish them or agreeably allow grace to dissolve them.

Sanjaya said:

47. Having thus spoken in the midst of the battlefield, throwing down his bow and arrows, Arjuna sank down on the seat of the chariot, his heart overwhelmed by sorrow.

Before, Arjuna's bow slipped from his hand because his grasp was weak. Now, the devotee, dramatizing sadness and despair characteristic of self-pity, intentionally discards the bow as a gesture of futility. The act may also be seen as one of defiance grounded in emotional immaturity and neurotic self-centeredness; a display of resistance to that Higher Good which must inevitably be acknowledged, experienced, and actualized.

It should be remembered that in the *Gita* story the dialogue between Arjuna and Krishna represents the soul's observation of conditioned feelings, thoughts, and inclinations along with its aspirations and intuitive apprehension of higher knowledge. The contest is between the compulsion to remain identified with outer circumstances because of restlessness and confusion and the innate impulse to have awareness restored to wholeness. These two drives can be apparent to us whenever we reflect upon the matter of who we are and our relationship with life, whether absorbed in meditative contemplation or routinely involved in ordinary activities and relationships.

In the Upanishad of the Bhagavad Gita, the science of the Absolute, the scripture of Yoga and the dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna, thus ends the first chapter, entitled The Yoga of the Despondency of Arjuna

CHAPTER TWO OF THE BHAGAVAD GITA

The Yoga of Knowledge

In the second chapter, titled *Samkhya Yoga*, instruction in matters essential to understanding the facts of life and awakening to Self-realization and liberation of consciousness begins. Samkhya philosophy numbers the categories of cosmic manifestation. When knowledge of consciousness is flawless, erroneous beliefs are banished, enabling soul awareness to be restored to its natural state of wholeness. This chapter has been called the heart of the *Gita*, the remaining chapters which elaborate on the central theme comprise its body.

Sanjaya said:

1. To him who was overcome by self-pity and emotional despair, whose downcast eyes were filled with tears, Krishna spoke these words:

The devotee in this state of mental confusion and emotional unrest continues to be preoccupied with matters which, while they seem to be important, really are not. The dramatization of sadness is an emotionally immature display of self-indulgence.

Krishna spoke:

2. From whence has this timidity come to you at this difficult time? It is not befitting you who are of noble character. It does not lead to heaven (the state of spiritual fulfillment), and can only cause you disgrace.

During moments of introspective reflection, when confronted by challenge and when choices need to be made, our common sense and intuition may remind us that our behavior is inappropriate. We may inwardly know that the course of actions we are inclined to take because of allowing our moods to determine them cannot result in constructive ends, that the outcomes will be unfortunate. Indecisiveness, lack of knowledge of meaningful purpose, a negative self-

image, flawed awareness of ourselves as spiritual beings, fear of failure, fear of what others will think of us regardless of our actions, fear that it is not right for us to exercise free will, and other considerations, may impair ability to function.

3. Yield not to this unmanliness; it is not becoming of you. Abandon this show of weakness and faintheartedness. Stand up, Arjuna!

The practical advice is to renounce passivity which is not appropriate when what is needed is decisiveness and constructive action to accomplish worthwhile purposes. As spiritual beings, we are supposed to be insightful and creatively functional. Petty self-centeredness and dramatizations of weakness and cowardice are not soul characteristics; they are symptoms of neurosis and dysfunction. Hence, the command "stand up"—to confront what needs to be looked at, make the right choice, and decisively act with clear, focused intention.

Every aspect of Kriya Yoga practice should be given our alert, involved attention. During every waking moment we should be aware of the need to regulate physical and mental urges and impulses so as to live appropriately, skillfully, and successfully. When meditating, we should lay aside mundane concerns and withdraw attention from physical, emotional, and mental processes in order to contemplate God and transcendent realities without distractions of any kind. When contemplating the truth of ourselves, and of God and universal processes, we should use our intelligence and intuition to see through outer appearances and our own beliefs and illusions to what is actually real or true. When aspiring to awaken in God we should renounce all thoughts and concerns about anything other than God. At all times we should be impelled by willingness to awaken from unconscious states so that complete Self-knowledge and illumination of consciousness can spontaneously unfold.

Arjuna spoke:

4. O Krishna, how can I kill Bhishma and Drona in battle? How can I fight with my skills against these two venerable beings?

O my Divine Self, my True, Knowledgeable Reality, how can I eliminate

the false sense of independent existence and memories of experience? How can I use my skills against these two long-standing conditions?

When we are not yet Self-realized, when we are still looking *at* the enlightened state from the deluded point of view of being a self-conscious creature, we may turn to our higher, true nature as a source of knowledge and inspiration. We may ask how we can possibly remove the error of belief of independent existence which keeps our awareness removed from direct experience of wholeness, and how our memories of prior experience may be ignored. Conditions which have long persisted may even be venerated or respected by us because of their seeming indestructibility. *Bhishma* is a code word for both cosmic individuality and the personal sense of individuality. The appearance of cosmic individuality makes possible universal manifestation. The personal sense of individuality causes the soul to unconsciously identify with mind and matter. Memories, impressions (*samskaras*) of experience of all kinds, are often tenacious, clinging to the mental field because it is characteristic of them to do so and because of the deluded soul's identification and attachment to them. To transcend these two long-standing conditions the devotee needs only to renounce them by withdrawing attention from them. To struggle to overcome egoism and the influences of mental impressions is to presume them to have power which they do not really have—to consider them to be formidable when they are not.

5. Indeed, rather than to slay these noble teachers it would be preferable for me to be a beggar here on earth. Having slain the teachers, with desire for personal gain, I would only enjoy here on earth delights and pleasures stained with their blood.

The sense of individuality and the storehouse of memories are referred to as teachers because they support the self-conscious condition. They provide continuity of individualized existence, a sense of personal history of passage through time, and information about mundane circumstances. The devotee, because of lack of clear insight into higher possibilities, may feel that it would be better not to eliminate these two conditions, and remain at their mercy. At this stage, one may feel or think that ridding consciousness of egoism and being free from the influences of trouble-causing memories might be cause for regret. This consideration exists only because the devo-

tee has not yet experienced illumination of consciousness which makes possible higher understanding based on true knowledge.

6. And we do not know which for us is preferable; whether we should conquer them or they should conquer us. If we slay the sons of Dhritarashtra now standing here before us, we would not wish to live.
7. My very being is overcome by pity and weakness. My mind is confused as to my duty. I implore you: correct me, teach me, tell me for certain what is the better way. I am your pupil. I seek refuge in your guidance.
8. I do not see what will dispel this sorrow which dries up my senses, even if I should obtain on earth unrivaled personal power and prosperity, or even godlike dominion.

Indecision and irrational thinking continues. The devotee feels that life without the companionship of the tendencies of the unenlightened, therefore conditioned, mind (*Dhritarashtra*) would be devoid of familiar meaning. Now, however, there is hope! The devotee, weary of fruitless mental quandary, surrenders, and asks for help in the form of right knowledge while admitting that no solution has thus far been found.

Sanjaya said:

9. Thus having addressed Krishna, Arjuna proclaimed: I will not fight. Then having spoken, he was silent.

The devotee, though still somewhat self-consciously willful and resistant to the earlier invitation to engage in righteous action, finally does the right thing by deciding to be quiet. Mental stillness and receptivity to learning are necessary conditions if the way of discipleship is to be apprehended and successfully lived.

10. To Arjuna, who was dejected, Krishna smiled, O Dhritarashtra, and in between two armies he spoke these words:

The devotee, now aware of both the superior qualities of the soul nature and of the existence of the mind's unenlightened condition (*Dhritarashtra*), though still somewhat depressed, experiences a degree of happiness because it discerns that circumstances might not be as bad as was once believed. This is indicated by Krishna's

smile which implies that no real problems exist, that the matter at hand can be addressed with objectivity.

Krishna spoke:

11. You have been mourning those that need not be mourned, and yet you speak some words as if with wisdom. The wise mourn neither for the dead nor for the living.
12. Never was there a time when I was not, nor you, nor these others; and never will be there a time when we shall cease to be.
13. As one passes through childhood, youth, and old age in the body, even so does the soul acquire another body; the wise person is not deluded about this.

Arjuna's problem was that of attachment to the false idea that he was other than a radiant, God-expressed being. When this error of the intellect is corrected, the products of ignorance are nonexistent. Arjuna is told that he has been indulging in unnecessary concerns about the welfare of those forces which represent obstacles to his spiritual fulfillment. He is told that the One Life prevails while objective circumstances are transient. He should see the One Life behind the panorama of appearances and go forward to accomplish a noble purpose. Just as the true Self which enlivens bodies is not them, so the One Life enlivens mental tendencies while remaining independent of them. Arjuna has been grieving over transitory changes instead of seeing beyond conditions to Reality. Only people deficient in knowledge mourn the passing of bodies, things, and circumstances which by their nature have temporary existence.

14. Material sensations causing cold, heat, pleasure, or pain, are transient and impermanent. Endure them while you seek knowledge.

What is impermanent, even if temporarily uncomfortable, can be patiently endured until knowledge of how to improve conditions is acquired. True patience is other than complacent agreement to unpleasant circumstances; it is being soul-centered, mentally peaceful, and emotionally calm regardless of outer circumstances. Because thought processes and feelings are also external to the soul, we can be patient even when mentally conflicted or emotionally challenged, until conflict is resolved and emotional stability is restored.

15. The devotee who is not troubled by these sensations, who remains unmoved during episodes of transient pain or pleasure, who is wise, becomes receptive to the realization of eternal life.

To be spiritually aware is to be undisturbed by any outer condition. Such equanimity is not the result of disinterest, but of superior understanding which makes us receptive to spontaneous soul unfoldments, illumines our consciousness, and provides direct experience (realization) of immortality. No longer addicted to petty concerns, soul awareness can expand and reclaim omnipresence.

16. That which is nonexistent does not come into manifestation; that which truly exists never ceases to be. Seers know this to be true.
17. Know that the life that pervades the universe is indestructible and no one can change or cause it to be nonexistent.
18. Bodies inhabited by the eternal, indestructible, immeasurable embodied Self come to an end. Therefore, engage in righteous endeavor.
19. Those who think the Self can slay or be slain fail to discern the truth; no one either slays or is slain.

Consciousness alone exists. It manifests by self-referring processes which express as various categories and aspects. From the field of Pure Consciousness an impulse arises which produces the Godhead with attributes or qualities (*gunas*) of consciousness: *sattva*, illuminating; *tamas*, which contributes to inertia; and *rajas*, transformative processes resulting from *sattvic* and *tamasic* interactions. From the Godhead the Word (*Om*) flows to express as modifications of itself: space, time, and primary cosmic forces—the field of primordial nature, the substance which manifests as all forms. From the field of primordial nature, Cosmic or Universal Mind is produced as the result of Cosmic Individualization (*Bhishma* in the *Gita* story). Through Cosmic Mind are produced the subtle essences (*tattvas*) of the five sense organs and five organs of action, and the five elements which interact to produce the causal, astral, and physical realms. Rays of the light of God's consciousness shining on the field of primordial nature reflect as individualized expressions of consciousness, or souls—the true Self of every person and creature.

Since consciousness alone exists, there can be no other essence or thing. This fact can only be directly known. Endeavors to prove or disprove it by any means other than by intuitive perception will fail.

Even intellectual inquiry, while useful and can provide a degree of insight, will fall short of realized knowledge because the intellectual faculty is a material organ of determination. The field of Supreme, pure consciousness is without origins or endings. Its self-manifestations are subject to transformations and changes; although they come and go, consciousness remains ever what it is. Bodies and other manifest forms enlivened by consciousness are impermanent. That is why one should earnestly aspire to authentic spiritual growth while the opportunity to do so is present.

Consciousness, being eternal, cannot be diminished or made to be nonexistent. Because of this, belief that consciousness can be killed is a delusion based on faulty understanding.

20. The true Self is never born, nor does it die at any time, nor having once come to be will it cease to be. The true Self is unborn, permanent, and ageless. It does not die when the body dies.
21. One who knows that the true Self is indestructible and eternal, uncreated and unchanging; how can one possessed of this understanding kill anyone. Whom can he kill?

As rays of the light of God's consciousness, we are expressed, not created. When initially involved with primordial nature, mind, and matter, the soul's awareness is diminished in varying degrees, causing temporary, partial unconsciousness and tenacious identification with objective phenomena. This results in the primary clouding of awareness and the delusion (erroneous belief) of independent existence which gives rise to the false notion of "I-ness" or egoism. The deluded soul then becomes attached to erroneous beliefs, experiences perceptual errors (illusions), identifies with sensations and thought processes, and becomes somewhat forgetful of its true nature. The soul's awareness then becomes fragmented, mixed, or conflicted. However, because the soul was never born (created), it will never die (cease to be). Nor will conscious awareness of existence cease once the soul's awareness is restored to wholeness. Responding joyously to the soul's innate urge to have awareness restored to conscious wholeness or oneness assures rapid, authentic spiritual growth which can be spontaneously demonstrated as unrestricted creativity and orderly unfoldments of supportive events, conditions, and relationships in everyday circumstances.

Whom can be killed? Even though we know that the true Self of a person or creature cannot be slain, we are to be so established in harmlessness that no harmful thoughts arise in our minds and no harmful actions are performed. However, because the habits and psychological tendencies which are obstacles to our spiritual growth and effective functioning are conditions and not creatures, they can be dispassionately eliminated as necessary.

The direct way to banish unwanted or troublesome mental influences and psychological conditions is to immediately determine their nonusefulness and renounce them. If this cannot be done, concentrated self-training to modify mental and emotional states and behaviors can be adopted. For this, the *yamas* (restraints) and *niyamas* (intentional practices) of yoga are effective. The devotee's lifestyle should be chosen—including daily routine, selection of foods, how one earns one's livelihood if that is necessary, social relationships, time for regular philosophical reflection and spiritual practices—so that it fully supports the fulfillment of personal needs and of spiritual growth. Nurturing devotion to God and regular, superconscious meditation should be the basis of the devotee's spiritual practices. Cultivating flows of life force in the spinal pathway during meditation practice and centering awareness at the spiritual eye and the heart chakra at other times, will help one maintain inner balance and prevent excessive outward flows of life forces and attention.

22. Just as a person casts off worn-out garments and later acquires new ones, so after casting away worn-out bodies the true Self acquires new ones as needed.
23. Weapons do not harm the true Self, fire does not burn it, water does not wet it; nor does the wind cause it to dry and wither.
24. The true Self cannot be harmed; it is eternal, all-pervading, stable, unmoving, and primeval.
25. The true Self is unmanifest, cannot be conceptualized, and is unchanging. Knowing this, you should not mourn.
26. Even if you think that the true Self is perpetually born or is eternally dead, even then you should not mourn.
27. For one who is born, death is certain, and certain is birth for one who dies. Therefore, for what is unavoidable, you should not grieve.
28. Creatures and human beings are at first unmanifest, manifest when they appear in form, and are unmanifest at the end of their life cycle. Why should this be cause for discontent?

The author of the *Gita* compares the changing of a garment to be similar to the soul's casting off of bodies and the taking on of new ones on its journey through space and time. The doctrine of reincarnation is here taught as a philosophical concept that can be verified by personal, intuitive discernment. No attempt is made by the author to prove the doctrine; it is simply acknowledged as usually being necessary for souls according to their states of consciousness, karmic condition, desires which support fate, or soul destiny. Just as God pervading the universe is not influenced by anything in the field of nature, so the embodied soul, when fully enlightened or liberated, need not be influenced by its relationship to mind or body. However, the awareness of unenlightened souls may be somewhat modified because of identification with the mind, body, and environmental circumstances while the reality of the soul is not flawed. The true Self of us is an individualized unit of the true Self of everything. We are, therefore, endowed with all of the characteristics, qualities, capacities, and full knowledge of God.

Even if we were to erroneously believe that the true Self is frequently born or will eventually die, since there would be nothing we could do to change the facts, to grieve about what is inevitable would be an act of foolishness. Creatures and human beings are born and they do die because they are formed of impermanent, fleshly substance. Even this is not cause for sorrow, because of our present knowledge that the true Self is superior to the physical form it temporarily animates.

29. One person considers the true Self to be wondrous, another declares it likewise, still another hears of it as being marvelous; but having heard of this, no one knows it.
30. The embodied true Self is eternally indestructible. Therefore you should not mourn for any creature or person.

Regardless of how unusual we may consider the true Self to be, until we are insightful and knowledgeable because of being spiritually awake, we cannot accurately know its reality. Hence, no one in a state of conditioned self-consciousness really comprehends the truth about the omnipresent true Self, God, and the true Self expressing as the soul. To be successful on the spiritual path and happy in life it is useful to remember the soul's real nature and live from that

understanding without compromise.

31. Knowing now the duty before you, you should not hesitate; indeed, there is no higher good for a warrior-spirit than righteous endeavor performed as duty.
32. Happy are such devotees to whom such a fortunate endeavor is presented as an open entrance to spiritual fulfillment.
33. Now, if you will not undertake this righteous endeavor, and thereby avoid your own duty, you shall incur misfortune.
34. Also, people who know you will talk about your weakness; and for one such as you who has been held in high esteem, disgrace is worse than death.
35. Great warrior-devotees will think that you have abstained from your duty because of fear, and among those by whom you were esteemed will consider you to be superficial.
36. Unkind words and slander will be uttered by your foes. Could anything be more grievous than that?
37. If you are slain, you shall attain spiritual fulfillment; if you are victorious, you will enjoy life in the world. Therefore stand up, resolved to do your duty.

The true Self's innate inclination to unfold its potential urges the devotee not to hesitate in engaging in spiritual practice performed as sacred duty. Of all duties we might have, none is more important than that which nurtures our well-being, makes us skillfully effective, and facilitates rapid spiritual growth. When we learn of such an opportunity that assures our fulfillment, we should immediately respond in the affirmative.

Arjuna is portrayed as a warrior, whose duty it is to uphold and defend, when necessary, the *dharma*, the eternal way of righteousness (orderly, purpose-fulfilling processes) by which evolution is able to freely fulfill its purposes. It is, therefore, of interest to us that he, a warrior presumed dedicated to duty, shrinks from it when the challenge seems to him to be too great. In this, we see human nature at its most vulnerable. It is easy to do what we are capable of doing or what seems worthwhile. It is not always so easy to commit ourselves wholeheartedly when we are somewhat confused about the issues or uncertain of our skills.

When we are rightly resolved and effectively engaged in worthwhile endeavors, we are certain of success of one kind or another

because we are working out our fate (karma) and fulfilling our soul destiny. Not to do this, when we know we should, is to invite unhappiness and misfortune. Therefore, we should courageously dedicate ourselves to intentional right actions for the purpose of putting an end to all troubles common to the self-conscious condition. By so doing, we ensure our awakening to Self-knowledge in this present life cycle.

38. Considering pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat, with even-mindedness, engage in righteous endeavor. Thus you shall not incur misfortune.
39. This is the wisdom of the ancient seers. Now hear it, and apply it by dedicated practice. With this yoga of knowledge, Arjuna, you shall rid yourself of the bondage of karma.
40. In this righteous way no endeavor is wasted and no obstacle prevails; even a little of this practice protects one from great dangers.

Our approach to Self-knowledge and its actualization should be selfless, with focused resolve and devoid of anxiety regarding the outcome. With right endeavor and God's grace, fulfillment is assured.

This teaching emphasis is the core theme of all enlightened seers. The knowledge that is acquired lights the way. The knowledge that is self-revealed removes the soul from mundane actions of cause and effect, from karma. Progress is steady and obstacles are banished. Even a little right practice facilitates spiritual growth that brings the soul into a harmonious relationship with the actions of grace and the currents of evolution. Fear of present and future circumstances, including transition from the body and other-realm conditions, is dispelled.

– to be continued in the next issue of RADIANCE

THE PHILOSOPHY, TRADITIONS & PRACTICES OF KRIYA YOGA

Forum themes are requested by readers of this publication. Please use the form provided with each issue to participate in our open discussions: to let me know your thoughts, to have your questions and needs met, and for the benefit of others.

Please address the phenomenon of pictures of gurus and saints. Some of them seem to be potent with magnetic power that I find very attractive, and which elevates my mind and consciousness so that I am more peaceful—even blissful.

When we see a photograph or likeness of a person we can often be attuned to that person's mental states and states of consciousness. The photograph is then a "point of contact" for our mental and spiritual connection. Viewing a photograph of a guru or saint can also remind us of what we, too, can know and realize. In the house here at CSA which I use as a work space, every room has photographs and paintings of our gurus. They are there for me to see and they are in my heart, my being.

When disciples asked Lahiri Mahasaya if his photograph would bless their homes, he said, "If you think it will, it will. Otherwise, it is merely a picture of me."

When my guru was about eight years of age, he experienced a healing by reverently acknowledging Lahiri Mahasaya's photograph. He was stricken with Asiatic cholera and the doctors could do nothing to help him. His mother, a disciple of Lahiri, told him to look at the photograph. "If you inwardly show your devotion, you will be healed," she said. Master saw a brilliant light that enveloped his body and flooded the room, healing him instantaneously."

How important is the ego in enabling us to effectively function and accomplish worthwhile purposes? Some enlightenment traditions seem to suggest that the ego should be weakened and gotten rid of. What are your thoughts on this matter?

A sense of ego consciousness is necessary for us to be in touch with this world. That is, to be here we have to have a degree of awareness of being an individualized unit of consciousness. It is not spiritually useful, however, to be assertively egotistical—motivated by pride and willfulness. With the unfoldment of soul awareness, we discover that we exist as spiritual beings; that our ego consciousness is merely a viewpoint from which we perceive the objective realms. Our drive to excel and accomplish is then impelled by our creative urge to express, instead of by psychological conflicts or compulsive needs to be in control or to prove something to ourselves or others. It is all right to have the sense of individualized existence so long as we know and experience ourselves as free, immortal souls.

I understand that Paramahansa Yogananda confided to some of his disciples that he would reincarnate several years after his mahasamadhi [a yogi's conscious departure from the physical body at the time of transition]. Did he say when, and where? Has he returned yet?

He was not specific about when and where he would return to this realm. He did say that he would be with Babaji, in the Himalayas, for a duration of rest before again being active on the world scene. He affirmed that some of his disciples would be with him and Babaji. Some of the disciples to whom he said this are still embodied. I intuitively feel that it will be many earth-years before he returns.

Some interesting rumors have recently been brought to my attention. One person told me that she met Master in his most recent incarnation about 20 years ago, in Arizona. He was a small boy then, she said, and responded when she called him by his former childhood name. When questioned, he supposedly said that his mission this time was somehow related to discovery in the field of electricity. She lost track of the boy when the family which had adopted him moved to another city. I consider this an instance of either idle speculation or mistaken identity.

Another person told me that, while in India recently, someone at an ashram she visited told her that the reincarnated Yogananda is now a teenager and sometimes visits that ashram but does not come onto the grounds. I consider this to be pseudo-information: unfounded "ashram gossip" typical of the kind indulged in when people can think of nothing better to do with their time.

> No matter how much I try to see the light of the spiritual eye, it eludes me. Yet, I do feel soul-centered and peaceful when I meditate. How important is it to see inner light?

If you see inner light, it can attract your attention and help to keep it internalized. If you do not see inner light, do not be dismayed. More important than seeing light is to know and experience that you, as consciousness, are light. What you know and experience yourself to be is of greater value than what you see or perceive that is subject to appearing and disappearing.

Sometimes inner light manifests when we are very calm and not consciously looking for it. At first, it may be a manifestation of electrical activities within the brain. Later, when the meditator's mind is cleared of distracting influences, the soul's radiance is reflected in the mental field. Even so, what is perceived is other than what the meditator is. Be more attentive to discovering and experiencing yourself as a being of pure consciousness. This will satisfy.

EMPLOYMENT-SERVICE OPPORTUNITY AT CSA

CSA headquarters needs the services of another person. We are looking for someone who is: 1) dedicated to this work; 2) emotionally mature and responsible; that is, not looking for a place to withdraw from the world, emotionally dependent, or not able to accept and follow instructions; 3) agreeable to being here for a long time. Service opportunities include computer typesetting in the publications department, audio and video production, and national and international wholesale and retail book advertising and distribution. Our worker-members are paid a salary, live off the grounds, and are responsible for their personal lives. If interested, send information about yourself along with a small photo. Please do not inquire if you are desperate for a job, looking for a spiritual community because you want to get away from the world, or are presently confused or overwhelmed with personal problems and challenges.

Addendum

Listen, listen, listen to my heart's song,
Listen, listen, listen to my heart's song:
I will never forget You; I will never forsake You;
I will never forget You; I will never forsake You.*

Are We Honestly Dedicated to the Spiritual Path?

How can we know whether or not we are honestly dedicated to the spiritual path? Evidence is immediately observed by noting how we are living and what is being daily experienced. In the New Testament (*The Gospel According to Saint Matthew* 7:20) the words are direct: "Therefore by their fruits shall you know them." The fruitage—that which is produced, manifested, demonstrated, or experienced in our lives—is always exactly in accord with our states of consciousness, mental states, and behaviors. What we *are* (our state of being) and what we *do* determines the results, always. What we are dedicated to, where our attention is, reflects what we most love, what we think and feel to be important to us. How about it? Do our states of consciousness, mental states, behaviors, and day-to-day experiences prove beyond a shadow of doubt that we are honestly dedicated to the spiritual path? Sincerely think about your relationship with the Infinite, how relatively brief your earth sojourn is, and what is most important to your present and future well-being.

If we are not thinking in terms of our relationship with the Infinite every waking moment, if we are not putting spiritual growth and God-awareness first, if we are not continuing to learn and to apply what we learn, if we are not consciously choosing to live up to our highest potential with caring attention, if we are not serving the cause of evolution by endeavoring to share the light of truth with others and to be in harmony with nature's processes, we are missing the mark because our priorities (what we consider to be important to do or to experience) are in opposition to the soul's innate urge to have awareness restored to understanding and freedom. The results of inattention to essential matters are mental conflict, emotional

*Adapted from a devotional chant taught by Paramahansa Yogananda.

unrest, a variety of problems and challenges, and a sense of spiritual loneliness because unwisely chosen external involvements are self-created obstacles to spiritual growth.

The Kriya Yoga way of life requires total commitment to spiritual growth which unfolds Self-knowledge and makes possible knowledge and experience (realization) of God and of life's processes. The guidelines are: 1) disciplined regulation of physical and mental impulses; 2) insightful analysis (intellectual and intuitive examination and contemplation to acquire insight) of the nature, characteristics, and operations of consciousness to provide knowledge of God, the reality of the soul, and of life's processes; 3) surrender of self-consciousness to allow God-consciousness to be realized.

Disciplined regulation of physical and mental impulses contributes to psychological transformation, rational thinking, conservation and transmutation of vital forces, effective accomplishment of purposes, emotional balance, and mastery of mental states and of states of consciousness. Insightful analysis of the nature of consciousness provides necessary knowledge. Surrender of self-consciousness in favor of God-consciousness dissolves egoism (the sense of independent being) so that wholeness or oneness can be experienced. Giving necessary attention to these matters is the spiritual duty of every initiated disciple—not because there is a person-like God who demands it, but because it is the most direct, rapid way to authentic spiritual growth.

Be clear in mind and awareness that you, as a soul, are an individualized unit of God's consciousness. All of the soul-redemptive actions (*kriyas*) we implement are for the purpose of removing obstacles to this knowledge and awareness. The primary obstacles are erroneous (false) beliefs that keep us deluded (ignorant of the truth or facts of life) and illusions (misperceptions) which cause mental, emotional, and behavioral confusion.

A functional degree of intelligence is needed on the spiritual path. We have to be able to understand what it is we are endeavoring to experience and how to do it. Learn to use your intellectual powers effectively. Learn to comprehend what you inwardly contemplate, read, and hear. Sri Yukteswar used to say: "Saintliness is not dumbness! Divine perceptions are not [intellectually or in any other way] incapacitating!" Improvement of intellectual skills contributes to increased spiritual awareness and spiritual awareness purifies

intelligence.

Devotion to the process of spiritual growth is also necessary, to remain motivated and steadfast in resolve. However God is real to you, love God. If your aspiration is to realize pure consciousness, be devoted to that ideal. Be aware of the fact that the state you aspire to realize is not a far-off condition to reach for or attain; it is the core essence of your being. When awareness is removed from influences which cloud it, pure consciousness is experienced.

Respect our enlightenment tradition, the teachings, the gurus (teachers), and the person who initiated you into Kriya Yoga practices. Where there is devotion, love, and respect, *there* will be peace, harmony, and progress. This way of life is the direct way of liberation of consciousness, of salvation. Soul consciousness is liberated when nothing fragments, confines, or suppresses it. *Salvation* means to be saved or removed from misfortune, pain, and trouble because awareness is devoid of delusions and illusions and destructive mental conditionings have been transcended or have been completely eliminated. Respect for our enlightenment tradition is demonstrated by doing our absolute best to be a disciple (one who is willing to learn) of God. Complete commitment is demonstrated by our confidence in the teachings and our faithful adherence to them. To mix incompatible teachings and practices—in a vain endeavor to be "universal," or because of mental or emotional discontent or restlessness—is to adulterate or make impure that which is potentially useful. We should not be blind believers; we should be clear-minded, purposeful devotees intent upon testing and proving the creative principles that determine desired results. Our personal, right endeavors and God's grace will ensure our fulfillment.

Spiritual growth is only authentic or genuine when it is easily, spontaneously demonstrated as harmony, right actions and total fulfillment in our everyday experience. Aspire to excellence.

A Cordial Invitation to Productive, Soul-Satisfying Participation in the Transmission of the Liberating Knowledge and Practices of Our Kriya Yoga Tradition

Because *kriya* means "action" and *yoga* means "process" or "wholeness" (depending upon how the word is used), there are many teach-

ers of Kriya Yoga systems in several countries. The teaching emphasis I represent was introduced to the West in 1920 when my guru, Paramahansa Yogananda, came to America from India.

Since then, this work has influenced millions of people the world over and several thousand of them have been initiated into its advanced meditation routines. As is true for most movements, only a modest percentage of devotees have been attentive to their practices through the years; the rest drifted away for one reason or another. Also, because of not really understanding how to live the Kriya Yoga principles, or lack of commitment or personal challenges of one kind or another, not all who have been loyal to the teaching (in spirit if not by their actions) have experienced satisfying spiritual progress. However, there are undoubtedly many in whom divine qualities have quietly unfolded. The fact that of the many who are attracted to an enlightenment movement, few understand the teaching and fewer still successfully apply it, should not be cause of undue concern. After all, we are but entering the 296th year of the emerging cycle of awakening (since 1700) and the numbers of people who are sufficiently receptive to this teaching are small. Therefore, ours is a pioneering spiritual awakening endeavor, a forerunner of what is yet to emerge in the centuries ahead.

Paramahansaji was fully aware of existing circumstances. In the 1920s he toured America to speak to the public in large auditoriums. It was not unusual for one to three thousand people to attend his lectures and for several hundred to attend his classes. He perceived what he did as his spiritual duty, knowing that only a few individuals in each city where he talked would commit themselves to regular practice of the principles and lifestyle guidelines. He sometimes said, "I am sowing seeds that may bear fruit in the future." Now and then a devoted disciple of God would come forth, quickly learn, effectively practice, and remain steadfast. Master was always looking for such souls and he recognized them immediately.

Many devotees were strong supporters of the work. Some came to be resident disciple-workers at one of the Self-Realization Fellowship retreat centers. Others provided generous financial support, facilitated meditation group activities in their local community, and distributed books and literature. A few, such as Sister Daya Mata (Faye Wright), the current President of SRF, her sister, and some others who met Master as far back as 1930, are still in the forefront

of the work and rendering exceptional service. Now, 44 years after Master's passing, only a few disciples who knew him personally are embodied. When another decade has passed, very few of us will remain. Although the knowledge will continue to be disseminated through the printed word, there is an obvious need for more spiritually awake Kriya tradition representatives to act as agents for person-to-person transmission of the teaching and the empowering energy (*shakti*) that must flow through a person because it does not flow through books and literature.

I was ordained by Master 45 years ago and have since represented this tradition and initiated truth seekers and devotees. I have no record of how many people I have reached through lectures, classes, and writings. The total number worldwide must be well over a million—several thousand of whom have been initiated. Yet, as it was with Master, of the total number served, only a modest percentage have continued with dedicated practice. As a yogi who does this work as spiritual duty, I am not dismayed when people do not take advantage of the opportunity presented to them, nor am I elated when they do. I just keep on doing what must be done, letting the results of my endeavors be what they will. My role is to be a servant of God. I came to do this work, Master confirmed this to be true, and I do it.

As I approach my 65th birthday, in March, with enthusiasm and clear future-vision, I am choosing to make some changes in the presentation (not the content) of the work, especially in regard to offering initiation. This is being done to more effectively serve real needs. I am healthy and vital and have no plans to retire. It is just that I will be focusing more on working with sincere truth students who are able to comprehend the teachings and who are willing to practice them.

The *quantity* outreach will continue with expanded advertising, increased book and literature distribution, public information lectures by myself and other qualified teacher-representatives, more availability of audio cassette tapes, and production of video cassettes starting this winter.

The *quality* work with sincere devotees will be done at meditation retreats here and elsewhere, and through our various meditation groups. Kriya Yoga initiation will be offered to those who are willing to prepare themselves for it and who can accept the fact that

it is an important step on the awakening path. We will no longer offer initiation to everyone who attends meditation retreats for the first time; applicants will have to be ready for the experience.

For many years I initiated freely, as Master did during his years in America. However, I have noticed the same situation that he did—many people want to be initiated but are not willing to follow through with dedicated practice of the recommended lifestyle guidelines and meditation routines. They often erroneously conclude that what we have to offer is just one more teaching among many others in the new age-metaphysical marketplace. To initiate unprepared or uncommitted people is a waste of my time and does not serve their best interests when they are not prepared to acknowledge initiation for what it is—a new beginning which usually means a change of viewpoint and mode of living so that psychological transformation and authentic spiritual growth can occur. For initiation to be worthwhile, personal commitment to discipleship is required.

Another opportunity we are offering this year—on an advance reservation and acceptance basis—is a week long program only for initiate disciples who are willing to represent our Kriya Yoga tradition under my direction. Representation of this work will include facilitating meditation group meetings, literature distribution, and offering occasional public information programs using presentation guidelines and materials CSA will provide. When sufficiently prepared and qualified, our representatives will also be authorized to teach the basic meditation techniques and offer initiation. I am ever mindful of Master's words spoken in my presence many years ago: "In a few years, millions will be drawn to this work and there will not be enough qualified teachers to meet the need." We need many qualified teacher-representatives now. This program is scheduled at CSA from Sunday through Friday, June 2–7. If you are interested in participating, contact the CSA office. Detailed information and an application form will be sent to you. Your basic motivation for becoming involved should be that you are *willing* to be of service, not because you want to do it for personal reasons. When we are willing to do our duty because we feel ourselves to be called to do it—rather than being driven by psychological needs—we are more likely to be surrendered agents through which real benefits to others can flow.

The CSA ministry can also use a major increase in funding. Our

headquarters retreat center is debt free and money flow has always been adequate. Surplus income can be used for new outreach projects. Many of you are generous with your regular giving and this is appreciated. All initiates who do not regularly support this work should do so because this kind of personal participation will attune you more closely to what is happening, increase your sense of dedication, and strengthen your resolve to be one hundred percent focused on the path. Rendering useful, selfless service is just as important to our total well-being as are the other intentional things we do to fulfill our personal purposes and grow spiritually. We should care about the happiness, well-being, and spiritual unfoldment of others as much as we care about our own. Master often said, "While you are still learning to swim (in God), you can encourage others to swim."

Lahiri Mahasaya used to tell his disciples that the Kriya path was a "secret" way because a devotee should privately nurture his or her spiritual growth; not waste time and energy trying to socialize the teaching by endeavoring to share it with others who could not appreciate its value. Even so, he was always open to meeting and teaching sincere seekers. We should be like that.

No matter what you are doing, in the background of your mind let your soul's silent song continue to be, "God, God, God."

Back cover photo: Altar in CSA Meditation Hall, Lakemont, Georgia.

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Special Occasions to Remember

While a devotee should constantly nurture awareness of the Presence of God, it can be helpful to observe special occasions for deeper contemplation of the Infinite. Use an hour or more on the following dates to remember the teachers of our tradition and attune yourself with their consciousness and mission. Put a picture of the guru being remembered on your altar or on a table where you can see it when you first sit to meditate. Light a candle if you want to. Let your heart overflow with love and appreciation for the blessings that are yours. Meditate long and deep, dissolving in God's Presence.

January 5, 1893: Paramahansa Yogananda's Birthday.

March 7, 1952: Paramahansa Yogananda's Mahasamadhi.

March 9, 1936: Sri Yukteswar's Mahasamadhi.

On these special days, read appropriate selections from my writings and *Autobiography of a Yogi*. You can use the index in Master's book for references to special events. Know that on that day you are in mental and spiritual harmony with thousands of Kriya Yoga devotees the world over. Be open to insight. Feel God's grace flowing through you and around you, blessing you, all people, and world conditions. Be serene and joyful.

AFFIRM

My heart is flooded with gratitude for the understanding
I have and the spiritual support I constantly receive:
Thankfully do I rededicate myself to God and renew
my commitment to live a God-centered life.

Radiance

A Forum for Kriya Yoga Initiates

April – June 1996 Number 8

The Eternal Way

THE INNER MEANING OF THE BHAGAVAD GITA

The way of intellectual discernment of knowledge of God is suitable for devotees with keen powers of discrimination. The way of yoga practice is suitable for everyone because it includes meditative contemplation for unfoldment of innate knowledge and practical procedures for self-mastery.

Book Review

***God Talks With Arjuna* by Paramahansa Yogananda**

Dialogue

PHILOSOPHY, TRADITIONS & PRACTICES

An open discussion with initiates. Participation encouraged.

Addendum

CONFIRMING OUR DEDICATION TO THE PATH

Our dedication to the spiritual path is self-evident. We can know how committed we are by observing our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Just how dedicated are we? And what can we do to more effectively demonstrate our devotion?

God's will [the impulse of evolution], will accomplish its purposes regardless of whether or not individuals cooperate with it. However, when we agreeably cooperate with it, our spiritual growth is quickened.

– Paramahansa Yogananda –

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Our study of the beginning chapters of the *Bhagavad Gita* concludes with this issue of *Radiance* because book publication is being planned for early summer release. I was able to complete it in late January. Editing of the computer text will be finished soon and a manufacturing schedule is being negotiated with the printer. To economize on my writing time, parts of chapters five and six are being published in the March, April, and May issues of the *Studies in Truth* lessons which are sent to our membership.

I hope you consider the most important endeavor of your life to be that of being established in Self-knowledge and living in tune with the Infinite. Thoughts, moods, relationships, and experiences come and go, while that which is real and of lasting value deserves our alert attention because it is reliable.

> People enjoy things when they so desire. At the time of enjoyment, if the organs of the senses are fully directed toward the object of desire, desires [may] increase in double force. On the contrary, if attention is directed inward to the Self [soul], the desire of the heart [soul] can be fulfilled immediately.
>
> – *Swami Sri Yukteswar*

> Whoever remains serenely established in realization of God experiences the unfoldment of all the divine qualities.
>
> – *Lahiri Mahasaya*

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CHAPTER TWO OF THE BHAGAVAD GITA

The Yoga of Knowledge of the Imperishable

Continued from the previous issue :

41. On this path, those who are firmly decided are resolute; the thoughts of the uncommitted branch out in many directions and in endless variations.
42. The undiscerning people who rejoice in the letter of the scriptures, who contend that there is nothing else, whose nature is driven by desire and who are intent upon heaven, proclaim flowery words that result in rebirth as the fruit of actions.
43. They prescribe various specialized rituals for the attainment of enjoyment and power.
44. Of those whose minds are enchanted by these words because of their craving for enjoyment and power, intellectual ability is flawed and meditative insight is not possible.

It is characteristic of conditioned human nature to be confused and distracted. One is then often enchanted by glamorous promises and impelled to actions for the purpose of gratifying whims. Such a life often concludes with little or no spiritual progress having been actualized.

The *Gita* makes a distinction between worthwhile spiritual activity and ritualistic piety or self-serving religious practices. Some people pray, fast, and outwardly observe rules enjoined by their chosen scripture, hoping to acquire merit—good karma, perhaps, or the favor of God or of imagined gods—or gain of some kind: health, prosperity, or various soul powers or abilities (siddhis). Devotees intent upon Self-knowledge and God-realization should know that enlightenment naturally provides all that is needed for spiritual fulfillment, which is the highest soul happiness. Everything needed for well-being is present when we are established in wholeness.

A discerning devotee should know that endless speculation about various heavens, pointless discussion about scripture, blind adherence to rules which are not understood, and glib talk about abstract metaphysical concepts, are a waste of time and energy—a waste of one's life—as are involvements in magical practices to control the elements or to manipulate the lives of others for self-serving purposes. If the devotee is not discerning, even the meditation routine can be performed as a rehearsed ritual that is unproductive of soul-freeing results. There can be no soul contentment, mental peace, or effective use of intellectual powers so long as one's field of awareness is clouded, restless, and conflicted. Only when the devotee is surrendered in God can meditation practice be satisfying and samadhi be experienced.

45. The qualities (gunas) of nature are described in scriptures. Become free from these qualities of nature; be firmly established in purity, not caring for acquisition and preservation, and be Self-realized.

The purity in which to be established is the transcendent state of consciousness devoid of the characteristic qualities of nature. Thus established, resting in realization of wholeness, desire for acquiring things and concern about self-preservation cannot exist. These characteristics are only possible while egoism, a sense of independent selfhood, remains. While there is yet striving, even for that which is deemed desirable or good, the self-conscious soul is perceiving and relating to the world through its delusions and illusions. Even one's obsessive quest for union with God can be a barrier to realizing that which is already true—that God, being the only manifesting Reality, is always where one is, *and is the soul* seeking experience of oneness.

A devotee of God should learn to discern the difference between the soul and the mind and its processes, and to discern the influences that gunas, the influential, constituent qualities of nature, can have on the mind and body. Tamas guna contributes to mental dullness and inertia. Rajas guna contributes to restlessness as well as energizes the will to purposeful action. Sattva guna contributes to mental poise and life-enhancing aspiration. Tamas guna is neutralized by intentional right actions (kriyas). Rajas guna is neutral-

ized by the cultivation of even-mindedness and repeated episodes of superconsciousness. Sattva guna is transcended by nurturing Self-realization which results in permanent enlightenment (full knowledge) and liberation of consciousness. While yet in relationship to the field of nature and still "working out our salvation," we have a relationship with nature's qualities or gunas. When we are grounded in Self-knowledge, nature's qualities are supportive of us but they no longer restrict.

In the *Yoga Sutras* 4:32 and 34, the final stages of spiritual awakening are described:

> With the dawning of knowledge, the cosmic forces (gunas), having served their purposes, cease to be influential. When the expressive cosmic forces, having no further purpose to serve, return to their origins (the realm of primordial nature, where they become dormant), the soul experiences absolute freedom.

This liberation is thus described: (1) when cosmic forces no longer influence soul awareness; (2) when soul awareness is established in pure consciousness, referred to as the Supreme Self.

46. As is the value of a pond in a place flooded by water, so is the value of scripture for one who is Self-realized.

A devotee established in flawless Self-knowledge does not have to look to another source for knowledge, nor engage in further spiritual practice. While appearing to be good, a Self-realized person no longer has to endeavor to be good.

47. You have a right to actions only, not to the results of actions. Let not the results of actions be your motive, neither let there be any attachment to inaction.
48. Firmly established in Self-realization, do the work at hand; giving up attachment to it, be even-minded in both success and failure, for, truly, mental poise is yoga.
49. Mere action alone is inferior to the discipline of intelligence. Those who work for results alone are to be pitied.
50. One who has realized the true Self abandons both the good and the ungood. Therefore, aspire to the yoga of Self-knowledge. Skillful action is yoga.

51. The wise who have actualized enlightenment, who have renounced the results of actions and are free from compulsion to be reborn, are beyond sorrow because established in soul-bliss.

So long as our awareness is clouded or fragmented, psychological transformation and spiritual growth endeavors are our necessary duties. The results of our right endeavors are due to unfoldments of soul qualities and are not the direct effects of our actions. The ideal approach is to do what must be done without anxiety about the outcome and without claiming the results to be of our own doing. Because right endeavor contributes to success on the awakening path, our role is to do what is necessary as a disinterested observer of both the actions and their results. The key is to be established in yoga, the samadhi of Self-knowledge. The mechanical or rote performance of spiritual practices, devoid of disciplined exercise of intelligence, cannot produce desired results. Conscious, knowledgeable performance of useful actions is itself fulfilling because it removes delusions and illusions of separateness from the mind. One experiences a degree of unity or harmony, of life as oneness, and is aware of causative actions occurring without psychological compulsions or inner resistance. When enlightenment (full knowledge of Consciousness and its operations) is actualized, it is permanent. The soul, then established in Self-realization, is completely liberated from involvements with causes and effects which have only to do with the interactions of nature's qualities (gunas) and their influences in relative spheres.

52. When your intelligence transcends all delusions, you shall be indifferent to what has been heard and is yet to be heard.
53. When your intelligence, which was bewildered by conflicting [philosophical or scriptural] information, is stable and unshaken in realization of oneness [samadhi], then shall you awaken to flawless, insightful knowledge.

Established in Self-knowledge one is contentedly unconcerned about various philosophical or religious opinions and theories which may be propounded or discussed now or in the future by others who are not yet spiritually awake. When the devotee's intelligence is firmly established in pure consciousness, innate soul knowledge spon-

taneously unfolds of its own accord.

Arjuna asks:

54. What is the description of one who is firmly established in Self-knowledge? How does such a one speak and behave?

For a devotee new on the path, it can be helpful to know what will be the results of attentive spiritual practice. How does an enlightened person think, speak, and relate to others? What motivates their actions? How do they view themselves in relationship to others? What is it like to be Self-realized?

Krishna answers:

55. When one has put away the desires of the mind, and is content in Self-knowledge, such a one is said to be established in wisdom.

Because misdirected impulses and desires supported by delusions and illusions are in opposition to the heart's (soul's) aspiration to awaken to Self-knowledge and higher realities, they should be renounced by the resolved devotee. Soul contentment based on true Self-knowledge should be nurtured until soul qualities are actualized by direct realization. One is then stable in clearly comprehended true knowledge (wisdom).

56. One whose mind is untroubled in the midst of misfortune and is free from cravings in the midst of pleasurable circumstances, from whom passion, fear and anger have departed, whose meditative concentration is steady, is said to be a sage, to be wise.

Soul contentment enables one to be calm in the midst of discordant circumstances and devoid of even a trace of desire in the presence of opportunities for experience which might overwhelm the average person's self-control. The driving force of passion, fear, and anger (and other symptoms of mental and emotional immaturity) are entirely absent in the personality of one who is established in peace of soul. Because the various characteristics of psychological unrest are absent, meditative contemplation is easy, spontaneous,

and steady (uninterrupted). A comparison is described in the *Yoga Sutras* 4:26:

> Having overcome identification with the body, senses, and mind, consciousness becomes serene and calm, and awareness flows in the direction of absolute freedom.

57. That one who is without sentimental attachment, who does not rejoice because of pleasant circumstances or feel aversion toward that which is unpleasant, is firmly established in understanding.

Sentimental attachment is based on feeling or emotion rather than reason. A discerning person, while able to have and enjoy relationships, is not blindly attached to them, nor is such a one uncontrollably reactive to either pleasantness or unpleasantness. Insightful understanding prevails in all circumstances.

58. One who withdraws sensory awareness from temptations, as a turtle withdraws its limbs [into a shell], is firmly established in wisdom.

The wise person does not *suppress* physical and mental urges. Instead, awareness is *withdrawn* from things and circumstances which might otherwise tempt the senses or energize desire. An easy first stage of accomplishment is to be soul-centered, dispassionate, and disinterested. Intellectual discernment can also be helpful, to determine what may be the soul-inhibiting or unfortunate outcome of unreasoned behavior in contrast to what would be the outcome when wisdom is allowed to govern behavior. It is easier to regulate sensory inclinations and desires when our aspiration to spiritual growth determines our sense of purpose in life. Also, regular practice of contemplative meditation turns soul forces inward to the source of being, neutralizes prana flows, calms the mind, and produces a condition of mental, emotional, and physiological balance which allows soul awareness to remain constant.

59. The objects of the senses turn away from the one who abstains from them but the taste [memory and desire] remains. Even this turns away when the Supreme Reality is apprehended.

The subjective, causative law or principle of correspondences determines that our states of consciousness and mental states attract circumstances which conform to them. We tend to attract what we are agreeable to experiencing or what we desire and can accept. When we have no agreements, feelings, or thoughts about a thing, experience, or circumstances, these objects of the senses are no longer attracted by us—they seem to "turn away." We may, however, still have memories of past experience or desire for that which is not compatible with our aspiration to awaken to our highest good. As spiritual growth continues, memories no longer influence us and all nonuseful desires cease.

60. Even though a discerning devotee may continuously strive for perfection, the impetuous sense urges may forcibly influence the mind.

Until illumination of consciousness purifies the mind, while one is intent upon spiritual growth, emotion-driven urges, sometimes nourished by memories of past experience, may influence the mind to produce desires, fantasies, and even hallucinations of various kinds. These should be resisted, restrained, and transformed by disciplined endeavor and repeated meditative superconscious experiences. Superconscious experience produces constructive mental impressions (samskaras) which weaken and neutralize destructive impressions. *Yoga Sutras* 1:33:

> The mind is calmed and purified by cultivation of feelings of friendship, by compassion, joy, and neutrality [indifference toward matters of no consequence to the devotee's higher purposes], and by examining and contemplating ideal [alternative] possibilities.

61. Having controlled the sense urges, the devotee should remain firm in yoga [superconscious meditative contemplation], intent on Supreme Reality. For that one whose senses are mastered, intelligence is firmly established.

Mastery of states of consciousness and of mental and emotional states gives one control of sense urges. It is then easy to rest in contemplation of the Infinite when meditating and to sustain aspiration for God-realization in all circumstances when engaged in nec-

essary or chosen relationships and duties. Spontaneous samadhi, comprehensive awareness of the truth of life and its processes is then constant.

62. When one mentally dwells on objects of the senses, attachment to them is produced. From attachment comes desire and from desire anger is born [when desire is frustrated].
63. From anger confusion is produced; because of confusion memory is impaired. When memory is impaired, powers of discernment are diminished and one wanders aimlessly.

Preoccupation with sense objects may result in obsession which dominates awareness. Obsessive desires then may become so overwhelmingly important that anger immediately arises when desires are thwarted. Anger creates mental and emotional confusion and interferes with memory. A powerful surge of anger may cause one to confuse the present situation with a similar one experienced at an earlier moment in time, thus even one's sense of time and place may become disoriented. Powers of discernment are weakened, common sense is abandoned, and one tends to behave erratically and inappropriately.

64. But the devotee whose mind is disciplined, who moves in the world with the senses under control and is free from attachments and aversions, is established in tranquility.
65. And that purity of spirit removes one from all sorrow. The knowledge of the devotee is soon firm in permanent peace.

When the mind is disciplined by soul-will and superconscious influences, when the senses have been mastered and sentimental attachments and feelings of aversion are absent, the impulses (vasanas) which cause mental and emotional disturbance are quieted and inner calm prevails. When inner calm is established, the soul rests in flawless Self-knowledge that removes it from the causes of discontent and unhappiness.

66. For the uncontrolled person, discriminative intelligence, power of concentration, and inner peace are absent. How can there then be happiness for such a one?
67. When the mind pursues the inclinations of restless sense urges,

it carries with it one's understanding, as a wind carries away a ship on the water.

68. Therefore, the intelligence of one whose senses are withdrawn from their objects is firmly established.

Insistent desires can be as compelling as powerful external influences. Constructive desires inspired by aspiration to excel may elevate us to the heights of self-discovery. Misdirected desires may cause us to abandon our reason and result in pain and disgrace. Who has not, at one time or another, felt the strong urge to give up all that has been accomplished in order to possess the present object of desire? The direct way to master physical and mental urges is to assume an attitude of objectivity, to view them as other than ourselves. The soul is neither mind nor body; it is the immortal unit of individualized awareness that enlivens mind and body and is superior to them.

Observed with indifference, the inclinations of the restless sense urges are seen for what they are: mere effects of a deeper discontent. It is only when desires, attachments, and addictive behaviors are claimed as one's own that they have power to dominate awareness. When they are allowed to be a problem, it is only because one lacks the will to decisively exercise freedom of choice. Because right choices can be difficult to make when reason is clouded by emotional unrest, the more effective way to overcome the problem of restlessness and compulsive desire is to remove attention from externals—including from moods and thoughts, which are external to soul awareness—in order to perceive conditions from an objective point of view. To do this, all that is needed is to be self-reminded of the fact that we are other than mind and body; we are immortal spiritual beings.

An immediate way to soul contentment is surrendered prayer and meditative contemplation. By maintaining meditative calm during everyday circumstances, one can implement other helpful actions. These might include regulation of personal behaviors; decisive choosing of supportive relationships and circumstances; cultivation of optimism, courage, and will-to-live and to excel; intentional constructive thinking; intentional constructive verbal expression; a balanced, nutrition-rich food plan; a balance of activity and rest; and an awareness and conviction of a sense of meaningful purpose for living.

A primary cause of mental confusion, emotional conflict, and other personality disorders, is narcissism: self-admiration, arrestment of emotional growth at or regression to the infantile developmental stage during which one's body (and personality) is the object of erotic or sensual interest. (In Greek mythology, Narcissus was a youth, who, enamored of his own image in a pool of water, was transformed into a flower that today bears his name.) The cure for this soul awareness-confining condition is agreement to the necessity of allowing emotional maturity to unfold and be actualized. Ego-based self-centeredness is rooted in the illusion of independent existence, which is the cause of delusions: erroneous ideas and beliefs.

69. What is night for all [spiritually unawake] beings is the time of wakefulness for the disciplined devotee; for the one who sees clearly, what is the time of wakefulness for ordinary people, is night.

While self-conscious people, asleep to knowledge of higher realities, are enchanted by and attracted to objects (including relationships, circumstances, and experiences) which stimulate the senses, devotees of God are awake to truth. That condition in which self-conscious people think of themselves as being truly awake to what is real, devotees of God know to be unconsciousness, or night.

70. That devotee unto whom all desires enter as waters enter the seas, which though ever filled are ever undisturbed, realizes peace. This is not so for one who clings to desires.

71. That one who abandons all desires and lives free from their influences, without possessiveness or egotism, attains to peace.

Established in Self-knowledge, the devotee of God is unmoved by the stream of impressions which flow through the field of awareness during the course of daily life. Having renounced all desires, attachments, and the illusional sense of independent existence while intent upon awakening to complete knowledge and experience of Reality, a devotee who surrenders self-consciousness in favor of Self-realization experiences spontaneous illumination of consciousness because the soul's innate urge to have awareness restored to wholeness is no longer suppressed.

72. That is the divine state; having realized it, one is never again bewildered. Established in that state at the time of passing from the body, one can awaken to the forever bliss of God-realization.

The soul is divine because it is an individualized field of pure consciousness. This state of being, when permanently, consciously realized, removes the soul from all conditions which formerly clouded and confused its awareness. When necessary purposes and soul destiny have been fulfilled, when the soul discards the physical body it can awaken to the serene joyousness of spiritual freedom. To be established in Self-knowledge while embodied is to be liberated while continuing earth-life existence. Yoga literature refers to this condition as *jivanmukta (jiva*, soul; *mukta*, liberation), a state of salvation (Latin *salvatio*; Greek *soteria*), to be safe because saved from troubles and misfortune. A wise devotee aspires to awaken to truth-consciousness as soon as possible; to enjoy knowledgeable freedom of expression long before demise of the body. However, if Self-knowledge unfolds and is sustained at the very moment of departure from the body, soul liberation is also assured.

In the Upanishad of the Bhagavad Gita, the science of the Absolute, the scripture of Yoga and the dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna, thus ends the second chapter entitled Samkhya Yoga: The Yoga of Knowledge of the Imperishable

CHAPTER THREE OF THE BHAGAVAD GITA

The Yoga of Action

Although the final state of spiritual practice is soul tranquility because awareness has been restored to wholeness, to awaken to liberation actions are necessary to ensure harmonious relationships with life's processes and to facilitate necessary adjustments of states of consciousness. Well-intentioned but misguided actions often only further complicate our lives. What is needed is enlightened or knowledgeable action.

Arjuna said:

1. **If you consider the path of knowledge to be better than the path of action, why do you urge me to engage in this awesome endeavor?**
2. **With words that seem [to me] to be contradictory, you confuse my intelligence. Tell me clearly: What should I do to attain the highest good?**

In early stages of discipleship experience, the new devotee may find it difficult to immediately comprehend the complete meaning of what is being learned. Partial information about categories of cosmic manifestation was included in chapter two of this text; now the emphasis is on the way of necessary actions, the path of karma yoga. The devotee asks why, since acquisition of knowledge has been emphasized, is it necessary to also engage in actions.

Krishna answered:

3. **Arjuna, a twofold way of devoted life has been taught by me since ancient times; the path of knowledge for contemplative devotees and the path of right action for those who practice yoga.**

A twofold way of devoted life has ever been revealed to the soul by innate intelligence; the way of knowledge for those capable of pure contemplation and the way of appropriate, constructive action for those who should engage in spiritual practices.

The way of knowledge is that of intellectual and intuitive examination of a subject for the purpose of having insight into it. Very few truth seekers are able to engage in the subtle discerning processes necessary for success on the pure knowledge path. Most need to implement processes or actions for the purpose of eliminating psychological, physiological, and behavioral obstacles to the spontaneous flows of soul awareness so that innate knowledge can unfold. They need to nurture transformative changes that will allow direct experience of their true nature and of the all-pervading Consciousness which is the Reality of everything.

4. Not by abstaining from actions does one awaken to that freedom which is beyond karma, nor by renunciation alone does one realize perfection.

Karma refers to actions and their effects, the principle of causation. Actions may be constructive, destructive, or neutral. They may be as overt as a physical movement or as subtle as an impulse of an intention. In the material realm—all realms this side of the Field of Pure Consciousness are material, that is, nature's qualities (gunas) are their constituents—effects have causes. Events do not occur without causative influences being instrumental to their happening. When souls identify with mind and matter because of delusion grounded in a false sense of being independent of God, they become confused. They make errors in determination, experience mental conflict and emotional unrest, assume erroneous beliefs about themselves and the processes of life, become further bewildered by their misperceptions or illusions, and develop attachments, aversions, desires, and memories of pleasure and pain. These conditions comprise the individual karmic condition, which is not of the soul, but of the mind and the sheaths or bodies used by the soul when relating to material realms.

When aware of the karmic condition, a wise person discerns it as something to which to relate for the purpose of working with, overcoming, and transcending, rather than to claim as one's own. Men-

tal conditionings and emotional conflicts can cloud or obscure soul awareness, interfere with rational thinking, distort perceptions, influence behaviors, and attract circumstances which correspond to them. So long as karmic conditions are a determining factor in our lives, soul freedom is thwarted. That is why the devotee is encouraged to awaken to states of consciousness beyond karma. But so long as soul awareness is identified with the conditioned mind, neither actual avoidance of necessary transformative actions nor false renunciation of necessary actions by refusal to implement them, will result in spiritual growth which allows soul liberation.

5. **No one can remain even for a moment without doing some kind of work; every being is caused to act by impulses innate to its nature.**

In the *Gita*, work and action refer to what is done to accomplish purposes. Work can be accomplished by physical means, by mental means (constructive adjustments of mental states, thinking, planning, choosing, deciding, visualizing desired outcomes, and holding fast to an intention that will cause desired effects), and by spiritual means such as constructive adjustments of states of consciousness to restore awareness to Self-knowledge and maintain it. So long as the qualities (gunas) of nature are influential, we are impelled to experience action of some kind.

6. **One whose mind is deluded, who sits [to meditate], forcibly restraining the organs of action while continuing to mentally dwell on objects of the senses, is said to be hypocritical, a person of false conduct.**

Unskilled, aggressive, or naive endeavors to suppress feelings and impulses while remaining mentally preoccupied with desires are characteristic of a person who is still personality-centered; whose behaviors are determined by tamasic and rajasic influences. While one may present an appearance of being self-controlled, the outer facade is but a pretense. When meditating, the devotee should be fully attentive to the purpose of practice, disregarding physical and psychological conditions while giving complete attention to contemplation of higher realities. Concentrated practice of meditation tech-

niques—prayer, pranayama, listening to one's mantra, absorption in inner sound and light, and surrender to the soul's impulse to have awareness restored to wholeness—effectively removes the devotee's attention from causes of distraction. During meditation one should intentionally adjust the viewpoint from self-conscious preoccupation with personality characteristics to soul awareness which is calm and tranquil.

7. But that devotee who mentally controls the senses and, without attachment [to the results of practice], engages the organs of action in the yoga of action is superior.

At all times, especially when engaged in the intentional action of meditation, sensory impulses should be restrained and practice should be without self-conscious motive (without desire for any experience but that which contributes to increased spiritual awareness). The senses can be regulated by choice, mental and emotional detachment, pranayama which cools and balances the actions of body and mind, prayer, and superconscious meditation.

8. Do the work that is your duty, for [this kind of] action is better than nonaction; even the maintenance of your body cannot be accomplished without [necessary] action.

The work that is the devotee's duty is that which contributes to total wellness, harmonious relationships with life processes, and rapid spiritual growth. Unless intentional constructive actions are implemented, one's life is inclined to be at the mercy of environmental influences, the influences of unconscious and subconscious tendencies, and the actions of the gunas. A sincere devotee of God is encouraged to transform inertia (tamas) into constructive rajasic action until soul unfoldment allows spontaneous, intuitive, appropriate sattvic behaviors.

9. Except for work performed for the purpose of sacrifice, this world is in bondage to [causative] work. Therefore, do perform your actions for the purpose of sacrifice, remaining free from attachments.

Except for actions freely offered to support the processes of evolution, in the mundane realm the necessity of performing actions to cause effects prevails. Therefore, for your highest good, perform all actions as an offering to evolutionary processes, remaining free from attachments to your actions and their results.

The Sanskrit word for sacrifice (*yagna*) is commonly used in reference to ceremonies or rituals, during which material substances and or prayers are offered to God or to various governing aspects of nature (the gods) for the purpose of establishing communication, an orderly relationship, and desired benefits on behalf of an individual, a particular community, or social group. The emphasis in this verse is upon intentional offering of all actions for the support of evolution for the individual and collective good, to assist in inviting transcendent influences into the mundane sphere, and to hasten the actualization of enlightened consciousness. Actions performed in this way remove the devotee from unconscious involvement with mundane causes and their effects, liberating soul awareness.

10. **Having created humankind along with sacrifice, the Lord of Creatures said, "By this [sacrificial actions] may you bring forth; may this bring unto you the fulfillment of your just desires."**
11. **By this [sacrificial actions] may you nourish the gods and may the gods nourish you; by nourishing each other you shall attain to the highest good.**
12. **Nourished by sacrifice, the gods will indeed give you the enjoyment you desire. One who enjoys these gifts without offering them in return is a thief.**
13. **The good [devotees] who eat [absorb] the remainder of the sacrifice are released from all misfortunes; the wicked [egocentric, mentally perverted] who endeavor to nourish only themselves, consume their own ignorance.**
14. **Beings exist because of food [nourishment]; food is produced by rain; rain is produced by sacrifice; and sacrifice is produced by work [actions].**
15. **Know that the principle of causation [karma] originates in the field of God, and the field of God emanates from the Imperishable [the Field of Absolute Pure Consciousness]. Therefore, the all-pervading Reality is present in sacrificial actions.**

The realms of nature, creatures, and human beings are mani-

fested within an Omnipresent Field of Consciousness which has given of itself to express in diverse ways. In like manner, our experiences and circumstances are manifested within our field of consciousness and within the Infinite Field as we give of ourselves to express in accord with our desires and choices in harmony with nature's processes. The gods to which sacred texts refer are not entities; they are the influential forces which determine the actions of nature. They nourish us and we nourish them when our awareness is clear and our actions are appropriate. If we do not offer ourselves and our actions to life, life cannot nurture us because our choice to withhold what we have to offer restricts the flow of the currents of nature in relationship to us. Healthy-minded people are able to accept the blessings bestowed by nature. People who, because of psychological unrest or conflict, choose to be self-centered, often engage in self-destructive actions and further injure themselves.

Creatures are nourished by the food nurtured by the freely offered rain which, in turn, is produced by the actions of nature. A devotee should know that the origin of causative actions is the Field of Omnipresent Consciousness (God) which emanates from the eternal Field of Absolute Pure Consciousness. God is present in all offerings to support evolution.

Meditators whose awareness is immersed in the aftereffects tranquility ("the remainder of the sacrifice" or devotional ritual mentioned in verse 13) are eventually "released from all misfortunes" because of the purifying influences of superconscious realizations.

16. That one who does not, in this world, help to turn the wheel of causation thus set in motion [from the beginning of world manifestation], lives maliciously, sensually, and in vain.

17. For that devotee whose delight is only in Self-knowledge, whose satisfaction is in Self-knowledge, and who is content in Self-knowledge only; there is no further work to be done.

18. Similarly, for such a devotee there is nothing more to be gained in this world by actions performed in the past or by those left undone. There is no further dependence upon other beings or sources of causation.

19. Therefore, without attachment [to actions or their results], perform always the work [duty] that is essential, for the highest good results by doing work [performing constructive actions] without attachment.

A person who chooses not to participate in nature's creation and renewal processes is unaware of the real purpose of life, remains sense-oriented, and experiences a self-centered, desire-driven, purposeless existence.

For the Self-realized devotee there are no compulsory actions to perform because all necessary actions spontaneously occur: either as one is intuitively impelled to act or as life processes flow in the field of nature to support the devotee in response to wisdom-chosen desire or to provide primary needs. Established in comprehensive awareness of the fullness of life, the devotee is nurtured by the inexhaustible Source of everything. All actions should be chosen for their entirely constructive outcomes. This is the righteous (dharmic, right, correct, supportive) way to live.

20. It was by right works [actions] alone that ancient kings [like Janaka] realized perfection. You should perform right actions for the maintenance of the world.

Centuries ago, in India, King Janaka was renowned because, while fulfilling his royal duties, he remained established in Self-knowledge. His primary right action was remembrance of God in all circumstances. Even when enlightened, most devotees have personal responsibilities to fulfill and relationships to nurture. One should be aware of the interconnectedness of society, understanding that if the common life is to be decent and orderly, the processes of life must flow harmoniously from subtle to gross levels through enlightened members of society and those who are not yet enlightened.

Book Review

God Talks With Arjuna: *A new commentary on the Bhagavad Gita by Paramahansa Yogananda. Hardcover edition, 2 volumes, 1200 pages, $42.00, Self-Realization Fellowship, Los Angeles, CA.*

In the January-March issue of *Radiance* I wrote that I was happy to be able to announce the forthcoming publication of Master's extensive commentary on the *Gita*. Although the publisher had advertised availability this spring, copies of the books were made available to members and friends of Self-Realization Fellowship as early as this past December. A friend in California informed me by telephone, then had a set of the books sent to me early in January, for which I am grateful.

This library size edition is beautifully designed and produced. The hardcovers are dark blue with gold stamped type and the two books are presented in a handsome slipcase. The acid-free text paper will ensure permanence, and 14 full-page color plates of paintings by artists commissioned for the work depict Krishna, Arjuna, and various scenes described in the *Gita*.

Although I am pleased that Master's final, major literary endeavor has at last been published in book form after 44 years, I have mixed thoughts and feelings about the result. When I read Master's writings, I prefer to read his actual words, instead of those of editors who interpret his words. It seems to me that there is extensive interpretation of Paramahansaji's thoughts in this published work but I don't perceive much of Master or his spirit in it.

The editors obviously researched the Sanskrit word definitions, which are for the most part precise and clear. In my opinion, for a *Bhagavad Gita* commentary, the attempts to relate the message to Christian teachings, as has been done in this work, is unnecessary. It will not be satisfying to Asian readers who may not be interested, and may only confuse others or distract them from the central emphasis of the message. Unfortunately, Satan is mentioned once or twice, good versus evil is mentioned several times, and the mistaken notion that humans fell from grace in the Garden of Eden because of inability or unwillingness to refrain from sex-touch sen-

sation is included. Also, many of the publisher's footnotes quote sources published within the past few years to support the text, revealing the finished work for what is—the product of extensive editorial revision and addition instead of a lucid and powerful treatise on yoga that I expected and which I think Master deserves.

The verse-by-verse translation of the text will be of interest to readers, and there is much in the commentary that is idealistic, inspirational, and encouraging to devotees on the spiritual path.

On January 5, 1952, just two months before his transition, at a gathering of disciples at the international headquarters of Self-Realization Fellowship on the occasion of his birthday, Master announced to us: "I have finished the *Gita*. A new scripture has been born! You will see, when it is published next year!"

Now, after more than four decades, I cannot honestly say that I believe this published work to be the "new scripture" that Master intended. I am not criticizing the leadership of Self-Realization Fellowship, nor the editors who obviously toiled long and with dedication to produce the book. The board of directors of SRF are, I know, being true to their calling as they understand it, and have, for years, been dedicated to the promulgation of Kriya Yoga teachings. Editing of the book was not an easy task because it had to be done in Master's absence, without his personal advice or opinions.

Approximately a third of the text of *God Talks With Arjuna* could have been deleted without detracting from the message. The cost of printing and binding of the books would have thereby been reduced, allowing for a lower retail price (and easier reading) for devotees and new truth seekers. I cannot say that any of Master's writings should not be read, only that in reading this set of books the reader should be discerning—as one should be when reading any published material.

We obtain *God Talks With Arjuna* from a regional book wholesale company at a 40% discount from the retail price plus the costs of shipping to us. We are offering this set of books at a 25% discount from the retail price, plus the cost of mailing. If you want to order from us, your price postpaid is $35.00.

Dialogue

THE PHILOSOPHY, TRADITIONS & PRACTICES OF KRIYA YOGA

Forum themes are requested by our readers. Please use the form provided with each issue to participate in our open discussions—to let me know your thoughts, to have your questions answered and needs met, and for the benefit of others who read these pages.

In my heart I want to know God and live an exemplary life. I am aware of at least two obstacles that I allow to interfere: 1) I am uncertain of my purpose—what I should do with my life; 2) I am often apathetic: not really lazy, just somewhat depressed and lacking in drive to do what I know I should do. Suggestions will be appreciated.

If you really want to know God and live an exemplary life, you can do it *by doing it*. We always do what we most want to do. Examine your thoughts and feelings to see if there is any subconscious resistance to the aspiration to know God and live constructively with clearly understood purpose. One obstacle is that which was described in the first two chapters of the *Gita*, in which Arjuna is portrayed as being confused and discouraged because of having to choose between his righteous duty (to live a God-centered life) and his sentimental inclination to continue to allow disordered mental tendencies and longstanding habits to dominate his life. That is almost always the basis of any confusion we might have about what is most important to us and what is not. We may want to cling to familiar circumstances and be enlightened at the same time, which, of course, cannot be so.

Apathy and mental depression can be the result of being undecided about what to do. There can also be other supporting causes: tiredness, low energy because of not exercising enough, eating foods which unbalance the basic mind-body constitution, or unsatisfactory circumstances which seem to be oppressive and beyond our con-

trol to improve or change (job dissatisfaction, unfulfilling relationships, or the general confusion dramatized by many people in the world today that we allow to influence us).

We have to adapt to our environment and to learn to get along with other people with whom we are in relationship because of family, job, or community circumstances. Inwardly, we are always free to cultivate awareness of the Presence of God. Privately, we can read and reflect upon philosophical principles and we can pray and meditate to awaken to superconscious states. There is nothing that can prevent us from knowing God and living an exemplary life if we sincerely want to know God and live effectively. The key is, to *want to do it*! When desire is compelling, willingness, and the soul-drive to follow through, will also be strongly influential. Be sure to allocate at least one hour a day for study, meditation, and a self-care routine. This will provide a firm foundation for all else that you do.

> In some of Paramahansaji's writings Jesus is mentioned as being in communion with Mahavatar Babaji. Does this mean that Jesus is in our guru line? Along the same line of thought, is Krishna also in our guru line? I am aware that, in some Kriya Yoga traditions, Krishna is acknowledged.

Paramahansaji acknowledged all spiritual masters and saints as being conduits through which God's grace flows, while emphasizing the usefulness of mental and soul attunement with Mahavatar Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya, Sri Yukteswar, and one's own guru. Persons initiated by Paramahansaji include him in their line of gurus, as persons initiated by disciples of Paramahansaji should include the one who initiated them. Attunement with the guru line is possible when an initiated person respects the line of gurus. When there is disrespect, attunement is not possible, just as rapport between friends or family members is not possible when mutual respect is lacking.

As for Babaji being in communion with Jesus: all enlightened souls are in communion because they share a common realization of God. This does not necessarily mean that they have a personal relationship. To my knowledge, Lahiri Mahasaya did not mention Jesus as being in our line of gurus, nor did Sri Yukteswar. However, Sri Yukteswar quoted from the New Testament in his book *The Holy*

Science (written at the request of Babaji and first published, in India, in 1894) for the purpose of showing underlying similarities between yoga teachings and certain verses in the Bible. He did this to let western readers know that truth is revealed through many prophets. When Paramahansaji came to America, in 1920, because he was aware that most people who attended his lectures had a background in Christian traditional teachings, he endeavored to point out that truth is not confined to any tradition or culture. This made many Americans and Europeans more comfortable about practicing yoga. When talking to me, he never "Christianized" the teaching; he always emphasized the necessity of loving God, meditating deeply, serving others, and having liberation of consciousness as the ideal.

Kriya Yoga devotees may be adherents of any traditional religious faith, or none. Lahiri Mahasaya told Moslem disciples to read the Koran and pray in the direction of their holy city, Mecca, as prescribed by their teachers. He said that Christians could read the Bible and discern the inner meanings of the scriptures. The true religion (that which holds one to truth) is the right way of living that allows happiness and freedom and liberates the soul. Guidelines for living in the right way are to be found in many bibles or books which are considered by the faithful to offer revealed truth.

In the *Bhagavad Gita* commentary by Paramahansaji (see review in this issue), it is mentioned that Babaji is in communion with Krishna. However, this is not what Master said to me and to many other disciples. What Master said (as told before him by Lahiri Mahasaya), was that one of Babaji's prior incarnations was as the historical Krishna. The Krishna (the omnipresent Absolute Reality and the indwelling Presence of God) of the *Bhagavad Gita* is a fictional character based on the historical Krishna. When Master led a gathering of devotees in responsive prayer his words were: "Heavenly Father, Divine Mother, Friend, Beloved God; *Babaji-Krishna*, Lahiri Mahasaya, Sri Yukteswar, I bow to you all."

Which souls play various roles at different times and places is not important for our enlightenment and salvation (liberation of consciousness), nor is it necessary for our enlightenment that we know the present abode or activities of saints who once lived on earth. The important matter is our focused endeavor to assist ourselves to spiritual growth. Some spiritual masters, who left their physical bodies years ago, may have awakened to the transcendent state and no

longer have any relationship with the realms of nature. Some may be absorbed in samadhi, in a subtle causal or astral sphere. Some may be reincarnated. It is not spiritually useful for us to expect saints to be playing the same roles they played when they were incarnated decades or centuries ago. What *is* useful is to aspire to awaken to refined levels of conscious awareness that spiritual masters and saints experience. This is the way to fulfill soul destiny.

When we are attuned to the consciousness of a saint, it is the state of consciousness realized by that saint (or the state of consciousness we assume they have realized) with which we are in tune. If we believe strongly enough that a disembodied spiritual master or saint exists and can help us, even if that being does not exist, our belief creates a mental picture or thought-form that we begin to believe to be a real being. We then create and sustain an illusion, and may become emotionally dependent upon it. I think it is accurate to say that millions of people the world over are believing in, and praying to, nonexistent saints, and to a deity they do not comprehend, because they feel a need to have a connection with something more dependable than themselves to anchor their lives. As we become more conscious and insightful, we are able to see through our illusions to what is real. Many devotees cling to their illusions for years, remaining involved with their fantasies. Behind the saints and thought-forms of saints is God. It is to God that our devotion should flow. It is God's grace that is our ever-present cause of unfolding blessings and our assurance of liberation.

Paramahansaji used to say, to devotees, "When you give me your love, I give it to God." Also, "I am not the guru. God is the guru; I am but God's servant."

Enlightened saints who work with devotees have only one purpose for doing so—to turn souls Godward and assist them to Self-knowledge and God-realization.

Very few devotees have an intellectual understanding or an intuitive insight into what it means to be enlightened. They tend to be so confined to their conditioned viewpoints that concepts of transcendent realities are but vague ideas. They do not know the meanings of the words commonly read or heard, such as *God, soul, superconsciousness, samadhi, guru,* or *saint.*

God is the all-pervading, manifesting field or reality of the Absolute, the Field of Pure Consciousness-Being which is transcendent

because it is removed from the realms of nature. The more than 50 billion (a recent estimate by scientists) galaxies and countless causal and astral realms exist in the field of God's being.

Souls are rays of God's consciousness, individualized because of God's light shining on and reflecting from the field of primordial nature which is manifested by God's energy. Philosophers, theologians, and saints are right when they say that souls are "made in the image and likeness of God" because souls are individualized units of God's consciousness.

Superconsciousness is soul awareness. Preliminary superconscious states are usually mixed with thoughts and emotional states. Refined superconscious states are devoid of influences.

Samadhi is superconsciousness.

Guru (*gu*, darkness, heaviness; *ru*, light) means "teacher." A person who teaches any subject is a guru. A *satguru* is a truth (*sat*) teacher who assists the student (disciple) to learn and to facilitate the unfoldment of innate soul knowledge.

A *saint* is a person through whom the pure qualities of the soul are expressed. An enlightened person is a saint but not all saints are enlightened.

To be *enlightened* means to have innate knowledge unfolded.

To be *liberated* means that one is permanently established in soul and God knowledge because *delusions* (intellectual errors) and *illusions* (misperceptions) no longer cloud awareness or obscure direct perception and experience of the facts of life, the *truth*.

Devotees of God (especially Kriya yogis) should know these word meanings and do their utmost to hasten their spiritual growth. Devotees should not think of themselves as mere seekers on the path, or as being involved with a superficial "new age" activity. Devotees should be resolved to live wholesomely and constructively and to awaken fully to God-knowledge in the present incarnation. If commitment to learning and growing is unwavering, there need be no doubt about the eventual outcome.

We do not have to be concerned about our future when we are surrendered in God. While attending to all practical details to ensure our well-being, our trust should be in the *dharma*, the upholding influence of the Presence of God permeating the realm of nature. A knowledgeable initiate is a rational thinker, is self-responsible for thoughts and behaviors, walks by faith, and lives by grace.

When I sit to meditate, I pray, then I try to practice the meditation techniques. My mind is so restless that I can't keep my attention focused. What is the solution to this problem?

Cultivate devotion to God by aspiring to spiritual growth. Don't merely want to unfold your innate potential—be on fire with intense yearning to awaken to Self-knowledge and experience of God. For the best outcome, intense yearning should not manifest as emotionalism, but as calm desire that causes you to be able to easily regulate your thoughts and behavior. In fact, when devotion to enlightenment prevails, thoughts, emotions, and behaviors will be spontaneously regulated because the aspiration that determines your life will have priority. No matter what you are doing, awareness of God will always be present. It will then be easy to sit, pray, and meditate without being distracted.

Even if we self-consciously practice meditation techniques, if we sit long enough, some benefit will result. When first sitting, if you are restless and need to allow a few minutes to experience relaxation, consider that phase of practice as preparation. If you are devotional, just sit for a few minutes loving God. Or sit for a few minutes melting in the Infinite. Let your sense of personhood—your sense of being a personality-based being—dissolve. Pray, then practice meditation techniques while remaining absorbed in love for God or sustained aspiration to apprehend and experience pure consciousness. When technique practice ceases, sit in the silence and wait. Do not struggle. Do not worry. Just remain alert and be there.

The simple belief that we are not free is what keeps us from being free. Renounce that belief and experience samadhi.

Samadhi is not a state to acquire. It is our innate soul state. Just think: Eternally we have been in God; for a short time we are deluded; then we are again free in God forever.

– *Paramahansa Yogananda*

Addendum

CONFIRMING OUR DEDICATION TO THE PATH

Anyone can talk about being a devotee of God. Real devotees let their actions confirm their dedication.

Examine your habitual thoughts, emotional states, and routine behaviors. Do they confirm your dedication to the spiritual path? If so, continue in your resolve. If not, let your devotional ardor burn brighter and let your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors be completely supportive of your aspiration to actualize your true potential. Remember that kriyas are "actions" that remove all mental, physical, and circumstantial restrictions to soul awareness. Also remember that kriyas are not only the mind-calming, kundalini-awakening techniques practiced during meditation, kriyas are the all actions in which we engage during our waking hours.

A few minutes of daily meditation will *eventually* result in mental purification; intentional regulation and mastery of thoughts, emotions, and behaviors will result in *immediate* beneficial changes. The purpose of spiritual practice—which, if we are intentional, includes everything we do—is to remove restrictions to soul awareness so that we can be Self-realized and live effectively.

Just as thought processes and emotional states can determine our behaviors, intentionally regulated behaviors can influence our thought processes and emotional states. It is often easier to *behave* our way to constructive thinking and emotional balance than it is to think or feel our way to constructive behaviors. This is why it is helpful to do what we know is best, regardless of random thought fluctuations and shifting moods. By doing what is most useful, we acquire self-mastery and facilitate orderliness in our lives. By not doing what we know to be most useful, we allow mental tendencies, moods, and habits to determine our affairs.

The spiritual path is not for self-centered, weak-willed people; it is for aspiring, determined, disciplined devotees of God. We have to be "tough-minded" to be successful on the spiritual path. We have to

be willing to think rationally and make intelligent decisions. We have to be able to cheerfully say "yes" to what we know to be for our highest good and to just as cheerfully say "no" to what is perceived as being detrimental or nonuseful.

Inwardly Commune with God, Outwardly Demonstrate Excellence

Lahiri Mahasaya always advised his disciples to secretly practice yoga; to be inwardly committed to spiritual practices for the purpose of awakening to God-realization while being outwardly appropriate and decent in relationships. Inner self-care is first in order of importance because if we are not spiritually aware and psychologically healthy we cannot function effectively on a day-to-day basis.

Paramahansa Yogananda always meditated early each morning. When asked why he did that, he said, "If I am to share God with others, I have to first be anchored in God."

Be anchored in God. Let that be your first duty to yourself. Your life will then be an inspiration to others who observe your behaviors and who are capable of discerning your soul qualities. There is no need to attempt to impress others. A life well-lived is sufficient.

When you come to CSA headquarters for a weekend or week long retreat (or attend our programs in other cities), be a good example for others. Be cheerful, well-mannered, quiet, and attentive. Avoid too much social interaction. Use your private time for meditation and contemplative introspection. People who see your behavior will tend to emulate it and benefit as a result.

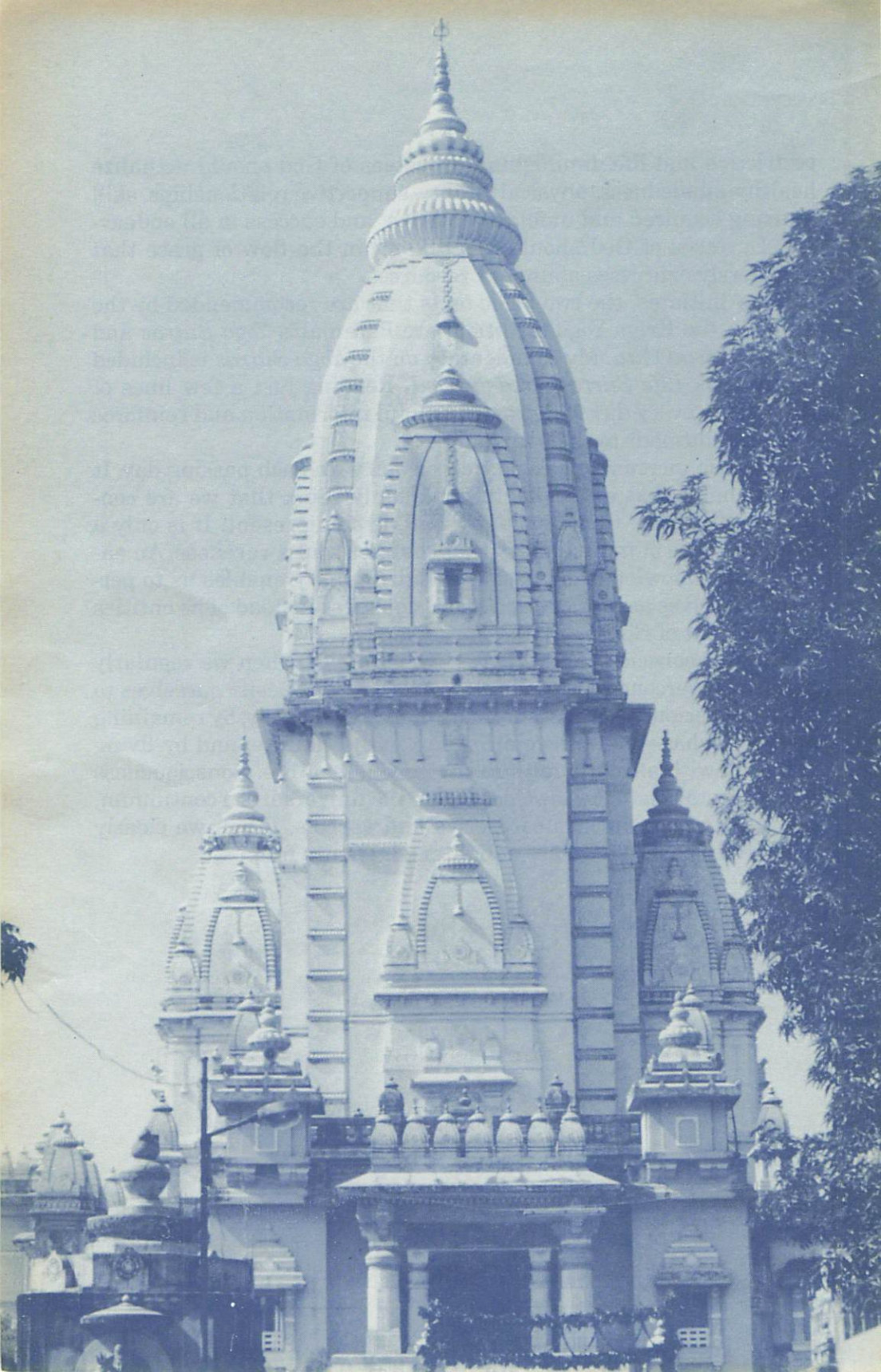
Live effectively and be successful. We can be as free in this world as in any other that we might imagine to be ideal. The material universe is a play of lights and shadows projected on the screen of space-time and our experiences are mostly the result of our states of consciousness, thoughts, and behaviors. Seeing through our delusions and illusions is the purpose of study of metaphysics (Greek *meta*, beyond; *physics*, [processes] of nature) and spiritual practice. We are to awaken to levels of awareness which enable us to perceive that reality behind the veil of nature and live with the understanding that clear perception allows. We should not be satisfied to remain at conditioned, self-conscious levels of awareness that are

restrictive and life-diminishing. Devotees of God should actualize healthy-mindedness, physical vitality, supportive relationships, skill in using acquired and unfolded abilities, and success in all endeavors. Devotees of God should be affluent, in the flow of grace that effortlessly expresses abundant resources.

For initiates, the two basic texts that are recommended by the gurus in the Kriya Yoga tradition, are Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* and the *Bhagavad Gita*. My commentary on the *Yoga Sutras* is included in my book *Life Surrendered in God*. Reading just a few lines of these texts every day will provide helpful information and reinforce your commitment to the spiritual path.

Become increasingly cosmic conscious with each passing day. It is only habit that causes us to mistakenly think that we are confined to the body. God, our larger Self, is omnipresent. It is only a deluded sense of individuality that confines soul awareness. An enlightened (knowledgeable) sense of individuality enables us to perceive ourselves as units of God's consciousness instead of as entities independent of God.

Cosmic consciousness progressively unfolds when we regularly practice superconscious meditation. We can also assist ourselves to cosmic consciousness by visualizing more expansively, by remaining aware of what we are in relationship to the Infinite, and by living skillfully with absolute faith in the goodness of life. Consciousness in manifestation (from the Godhead to the universe) is a continuum, one reality with various categories and aspects. When we clearly perceive life as it is, we are enlightened. We are free.



Radiance

A Forum for Kriya Yoga Initiates

July – September 1996 Number 9

The Eternal Way

HONORING THE TRUE GURU

While the agents through which redemptive knowledge is revealed and transformative energies flow are many, the supreme guru, the truth-revealing teacher, is God. We honor the true guru by remaining attuned to the Source and by expressing our devotion with appropriate behaviors.

Light Through the Ages

THE ESSENCE OF THE SHANDILYA UPANISHAD

In 1861 Mahavatar Babaji informed Lahiri Mahasaya that the little known *Shandilya Upanishad*, an ancient yoga text on meditation and spiritual growth processes, was written by one of Lahiri's ancestors. With this issue, we begin an examination of it.

Dialogue

PHILOSOPHY, TRADITIONS & PRACTICES

Addendum

WHEN WE CARE ENOUGH, BLESSINGS FLOW

Authentic desire for Self-realization expands our awareness and causes us to want to help others to also grow spiritually.

When you want to experience God as a thirsty person
wants a drink of water, you will experience God.
When you put God first in your life, you will know the
fullness and bliss of God-realization.
– Paramahansa Yogananda –

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

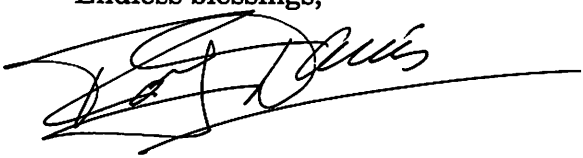
Radiance magazine is published quarterly for communication with devotees of the Kriya Yoga tradition transmitted through the gurus Mahavatar Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya, Sri Yukteswar, Paramahansa Yogananda, and myself. Your active participation by using the form provided for this purpose with each issue is essential to our open communication and continued inquiry.

The texts recommended for Kriya practitioners are Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* and the *Bhagavad Gita*. For your spiritual education and for motivation on the path, read my commentaries on these scriptures in, respectively, *Life Surrendered in God* and *The Eternal Way*. Apply your acquired knowledge in practical ways to provide opportunities for personal experience.

If you know Kriya Yoga initiates who are not yet receiving *Radiance* magazine, send me their names and addresses and I will send them sample issues and a letter of invitation to subscribe.

Be steadfast on the path and let God's grace freely flow.

Endless blessings,



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Honoring the True Guru

Even though Paramahansa Yogananda was acknowledged by many people as a guru (teacher of truth principles) and by disciples as their *satguru* (teacher who reveals and transmits divine knowledge and experience), he often said, "I am not the guru. God is the guru, I am only God's servant." He said this because he knew, as all enlightened spiritual masters know, that the ego-based personality is but a point of contact with the relative realms (the realm of appearances and relationships); that his real nature was (and is) *Sat-Chit-Ananda* (Reality-Consciousness-Bliss). The real nature of every being is the same.

Paramahansaji chose the words *yoga* and *ananda* for his monastic name when he was initiated into the order of swamis by Sri Yukteswar (July 1914). Yogananda means "the bliss (ananda) of wholeness (yoga)" or "bliss because of oneness in God." This bliss is not the effect of emotion or any sensory stimulation; it is the sheer joy of direct experience of the Self or Real Nature.

The Sanskrit word *Sat* means "that which is." *That which is* is changeless because absolute. It is referred to by sages as the unbounded Supreme Reality which supports the universes. It is the "I Am" of the Old Testament prophets which has no name because it is devoid of form or characteristics. It is all-pervading. It is the core-essence of every soul, to be acknowledged and realized. It is what every soul consciously or unconsciously yearns to experience and every devotee of God aspires to realize. It is not a state to be attained because it is not other than what our innermost essence already is. The invalid belief that realization of pure consciousness is to be attained, gained, acquired, or earned, is one of the subtle delusions that keep devotees striving without satisfactory results or evidence of accomplishment.

Many devotees say, "I am sincere, I am dedicated, I do my best to live a good life, I faithfully pray and meditate. Regardless of what I have done, and do, God still seems far removed from me!" What they

have not yet been able to do is to discard their contractive sense of self-identity which prevents them from directly experiencing their innate wholeness.

Of the relationship between teachers (gurus) and truth seekers, one saint said, "True saints point to God; their students often point to the pointer!" Even when we respect the embodied guru, we should remember that it is only by awakening to Self-knowledge and God-experience that the soul is "saved" from delusions and sufferings which result from them, and is liberated.

The true Self of us does not need to be rescued from present or future misfortune; it is the soul nature that is in need of salvation. The true Self (*atman*) is individualized pure consciousness. That which is transcendent in relationship to the individualized aspect of pure consciousness is the Absolute: Supreme Consciousness or *Paramatman.* When the true Self is so identified with mind and matter that it erroneously believes itself to be a unit of awareness independent of God, it is referred to as a soul. The true Self of us is neither body, mind, nor soul. At the level of Being all souls are omnipresent and omniscient as God is omnipresent and omniscient.

God is referred to as the Oversoul because God, too, is unfolded from the Field of Supreme Consciousness. But, God, unlike individualized units of consciousness, is never deluded. God, while all-pervading, is not influenced by nature's characteristics. They, however, are dependent upon God because they are aspects of God's manifesting energy (Om, the Word, the flowing Sound Current).

In Vedic literature the aspect of God that regulates universal processes and is influential in the redemption of souls is referred to as Ishwara. It is explained that God is not influenced by the needs or the prayers of souls, but is influential in removing delusions from the awareness of souls when they become attuned to God. While God's grace does not intervene in the affairs of souls as a compassionate person might intervene in the affairs of another human being, souls can experience grace when they are responsive to it. Grace is always available; we have to learn to receive it.

In Samkhya philosophy (the enumeration of the categories of cosmic manifestation) there is no mention of a personalized aspect of God. In Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*, the Ishwara aspect of God is mentioned (1:26,27) as the source of Om. Yogis and mystics who do not know of God's existence prior to their contemplative endeavors even-

tually discover and experience the reality of God as a supportive Presence. Thus, in most yoga texts and teachings of seers of various enlightenment traditions, devotion to God is recommended. Surrendered devotion results in abandonment of self-conscious states as superconscious, God-conscious, and transcendent states unfold. Prayer to God clears the mind and awareness of the devotee, making possible apprehension and experience of God.

To know God as God is, we must be emotionally mature enough to outgrow the child-parent relationship with God so that we can realize the truth about God. In like manner, we must be willing to outgrow the tendency to want a child-parent relationship with our guru so we can realize the truth about that relationship.

Many devotees of God are not able to generate sufficient desire for enlightenment to want to outgrow their conditionings. Instead of being childlike—curious, trusting, and capable of learning and growing—they remain childishly dependent upon simplistic beliefs, moods, and wavering faith in a God or a guru to which they can neither satisfactorily relate nor completely comprehend. Their cowardice impels them to deny their own divinity and to approach God or the guru with their ego-defenses firmly in place lest they be given a glimpse of the awesomeness of Reality.

A common obstacle to spiritual growth and mental illumination is self-chosen attachment to one's delusions and illusions. Often, so strong is this attachment that resistance to learning—a primary requirement of discipleship—prevails against almost every learning opportunity that life provides. One will then tend to refuse to try to understand or distort useful information to serve their self-centered purposes. Not all who are attached to their delusions and illusions are conscious of their avoidance of the truth. They may honestly believe that they understand when they do not. Others, who are not able or willing to confront the facts about themselves, may attempt to mask their rigid psychological condition by justifying and rationalizing it and their personal behaviors.

There are some souls which, having been attracted to a discipleship path because of an inclination to learn and grow, are incapable of comprehending the teachings. At their present level of unfoldment they simply cannot "see" the truth of what is presently available to them. If desire for Self-knowledge is ardent enough, there will also be sufficient motivation to study, experiment with right

living principles, and engage in spiritual practices that will effect transformative changes on all levels.

For a devotee with keen powers of intellectual perception, it is easier to comprehend basic philosophical principles and to somewhat understand the nature of God and the destiny of souls. If intellectual powers are not yet developed, a devotee can progress on the spiritual path by learning practical, how-to-live principles from a competent person or from books, and putting them to the test of personal application and experience. Constructive thinking, a wholesome lifestyle, right living, and regular superconscious meditation will purify the mind and body and accelerate soul unfoldment. In time, intellectual powers will improve and awakened intuition will enable the devotee to directly know all that is needed to be known.

A guru's role is to liberate souls. Some gurus prefer to be reclusive, unknown to the public, teaching only sincere truth seekers and disciples. Lahiri Mahasaya was like this. Others have a more outward mission. Like Paramahansa Yogananda, and some others, they endeavor to spiritually educate all who are receptive to learning while looking for those few among the many who will be ideal disciples (learners and practitioners of what is learned). As a disciple of Paramahansaji, my mission, like his, has been to disseminate information for the overall well-being of truth seekers as well as to work with individuals devoted to authentic spiritual growth.

A satguru (a truth-revealer) is fully conscious of playing a role, of being but an agent through which knowledge and grace flows. If a person believes that he (or she) is possessed of all knowledge and has the power to liberate souls, that one is deluded and is not a satguru. One Being, manifesting as the numberless universes, appearing as multitudes of forms of sentient life expressing various levels of understanding and degrees of functional ability, is solely responsible for the ongoing drama of relative existence and for the awakening and liberation of souls. That One is the true guru, to be faithfully acknowledged, honored by our thoughts and behaviors, and quickly realized.

The Essence of the Shandilya Upanishad

In 1861, in the Himalayan region of Ranikhet, Lahiri Mahasaya, then thirty-three years of age, met and was initiated into Kriya Yoga meditation practices by Mahavatar Babaji. At that time Babaji said, "The *Shandilya Upanishad* is really your own. One of your ancestors wrote it."

This ancient treatise belongs to the category of nine Yoga Upanishads which contain information of an esoteric nature. For this reason, Shankara, the celebrated eighth-century philosopher-seer, did not write commentaries on them for the general public.

The Upanishads were written as philosophical conversations between teachers and students, gurus and disciples, a writing style that makes them easier to identify with and interesting to read. The Sanskrit word *upanishad* is made from the verb-root *sad* (to sit) plus the prepositional prefixes *upa* (near) and *ni* (down), implying "to sit down near the spiritual teacher." They were written after the Vedas, the collected books of revealed knowledge (veda: *vid*, to know) as a means to explain the key points. They are not considered to be revealed scriptures, but expositions of truths first recorded in the scriptures. Yoga procedures evolved as a result of independent philosophical contemplation and personal experimentation to provide personal experience of subjective realities and liberation from conditions which ordinarily bind or limit the spirit.

In the text, Shandilya is portrayed as the inquiring student who is "sitting down near" his teacher Atharvan, asking questions which invite answers that will satisfy the mind and free the spirit. As source material, I have referred to an English translation of the *Shandilya Upanishad* by K. Narayanasvami Aiyar and published by him in 1914 in Madras, India. To clarify and to provide the essence of this obscure text, I have substituted English for Sanskrit when possible and added a brief explanation when it seemed necessary.

Shandilya questioned Atharvan:

"Please tell me about the eight parts of yoga: the way of realizing the transcendent Reality."

Atharvan replied:

The eight parts of yoga are *yama* (restraints), *niyama* (disciplined practices), *asana* (postures), *pranayama* (regulation and expansion of life force), *pratyhara* (internalized attention), *dharana* (concentration), *dhyana* (meditation), and *samadhi* (oneness, wholeness). Of these, there are ten restraints, ten disciplined practices, nine postures, three kinds of pranayama, five kinds of internalization of attention, five kinds of concentration, two kinds of meditation, and one kind of samadhi.

Commentary:

It is apparent that this opening explanation describes *ashtanga* (eight-limbed) *yoga*, also referred to as *raja yoga*, which forms the basis of meditation practice outlined in Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*. An exception in the *Shandilya Upanishad* is that ten restraints (*yamas*) and ten disciplined practices (*niyamas*) are mentioned, whereas Patanjali mentioned but five for each category. One reason for this is that yoga gurus teach the essentials as they are inspired, and to meet the needs of the disciple (the learner) being taught.

Text:

The ten restraints will now be described. *Ahimsa*, harmlessness, is not causing pain to any living being, by thought, speech, or actions. *Satya*, truthfulness, is conducive to the well-being of others, by thought, speech, and actions. *Asteya*, not coveting, is refraining from desiring that which belongs to another, by thoughts, speech, or actions. *Brahmacharya*, conservation and transmutation (to a more refined state) of life force, is accomplished by regulating the impulses of mind, speech, and body. *Daya* is kindliness towards all creatures everywhere. *Arjava* is preservation of equanimity of mind, speech, and body in the performance or nonperformance of the actions ordained or forbidden. *Kshama* is bearing patiently whatever is pleasant or unpleasant, such as praise or an affront. *Dhriti* is preservation of mental stability during the gain or loss of wealth or relationships. *Mitahara* is choosing nutritious foods in proper quantity. *Soucha*, cleanliness, is both external and internal. The external is

cleansing of the body; the internal is of the mind, which is accomplished by awakening to Self-knowledge.

Commentary:

These restraints or controls are for the purpose of regulating mental and physical impulses so that one is able to live a well-ordered life in harmony with people, creatures, and nature, and to nurture psychological health so that progressive spiritual growth can occur without disturbance or interruption. One of the reasons why some devotees fail to experience harmonious relationships and psychological transformation and spiritual growth is that they are not aware of the usefulness of giving attention to the above-described, basic recommendations. They may think they are on the spiritual path merely because they want to know God and they pray and meditate. They may not know that life has to be balanced and integrated and that it is here in this world that spiritual awareness is demonstrated as valid by their thoughts and behaviors.

Text:

The ten disciplined practices will now be described. *Tapas* is liberating the body from limitations by insightful self-analysis and disciplined behaviors. *Santosha* is being satisfied with what life spontaneously presents to us. *Astikya* is acknowledgment of the law of causation: that our circumstances are the results of our own thoughts and actions. *Dana* is giving lawfully earned or acquired resources to deserving people and worthy causes. *Ishvarapujana* is worship of God with a pure mind according to one's ability. *Siddhanta-sharvana* is inquiring into the meaning of scriptures. *Hrih* is shame felt when doing things contrary to the rules or laws of the scriptures or of society. *Mati* is faith in the spiritual paths described as valid in the scriptures. *Japa* is practicing mantras received from the guru at initiation. *Mantra* is of two kinds. Listening to the mantra and contemplating its essence is mental mantra practice. Audible and quiet chanting is verbal mantra practice. Audible chanting has value; quiet chanting is more rewarding; to mentally listen to the mantra brings superior results. *Vrata* is regularity of performance of these practices and the avoidance of those which are nonessential.

Commentary:

Tapas (practice of *tapasaya*, from verb-root *tap*, "to burn") requires honest self-evaluation and sincere endeavor to perfect the recommended practices. Doing this enables one to confront and eliminate psychological conditions which are obstacles to spiritual growth and the actualization of our innate potential. We should remember that the purpose of *kriyas* (constructive actions) is to remove all physical and mental obstacles to Self-realization.

To be "satisfied with what life spontaneously presents to us" means to thankfully accept life's blessings and to be equally thankful for the occasional challenges which surface and require overcoming in order to grow to emotional and spiritual maturity.

By acknowledging the law of causation we become aware of how our thoughts and behaviors result in our circumstances. We can then choose to be responsible for what we think and do, rather than blame the hidden past or external influences for our circumstances.

Giving to deserving people and to worthy causes keeps us open to the flow of life and is a practical way to demonstrate compassion. People who deserve our gifts are those who need them and will benefit from them. Worthy causes are those which are *dharmic*: entirely constructive and supportive of life's inclination to unfold and express in an orderly manner.

Worship of God means to contemplate the Reality of God in order to comprehend it, aspire to be God-conscious, and surrender egoism (self-consciousness) in order to experience wholeness. We can only do this to the extent of our capacity to do so. Our capacity increases by attentive, devotional contemplation and superconscious meditation.

To inquire into the meaning of scripture we have first to refer to a scripture which is authoritative: that which is the result of inspiration and knowledge. We should then use our powers of intelligence to discern the meaning of the text, verifying definitions of words when necessary. We can also inquire, "What was the state of consciousness and the degree of understanding of the author of the scripture? What was the intent that inspired the writing of it?"

To feel shame (contrition, remorse) when in error indicates a healthy conscience along with knowledge of what is appropriate and what is not. When we are well-informed, we can trust our conscience

to be our guide in life.

It is easy to have faith in our spiritual path when we know it is grounded in truth and when we can verify the usefulness of its tenets by personal application and experience.

A mantra (*manas*, mind, thinking principle; *tra*, to protect and take beyond) may be the single syllable Om or two or more significant words. A mantra given by the guru at the time of initiation has the extra potency of the energies impregnated in it by the guru's intention and by the energy frequencies present in the initiation environment. Audible repetition of mantra can be useful. Quiet, verbal repetition is usually better because it is more easily accompanied by inward contemplation. Better still is to mentally "listen" to the mantra as it blossoms in the mind. Mantra practice contributes to brain wave coherence, removes attention from physical and mental circumstances that might be a distraction from endeavors to concentrate, clears the mind and calms emotional states, enlivens the nervous system, imparts the potency of the mantra into the mind and physiology of the practitioner, and leads the meditator's attention to superconscious levels.

Regular practice of these recommended procedures and the avoidance of nonessential activities ensures that our endeavors are intentional and will be effective. Paramahansaji often said, "We can quicken spiritual growth by condensing experiences by concentration. In this way, we can accomplish in one life cycle that which might otherwise require several incarnations."

Text:

The nine (most useful) postures will now be described. *Svastikasana* (prosperous posture) is sitting at ease with the body erect, placing each foot between the thighs (at the juncture of the inner bend of the knees) of the other. *Gomukhasana* (cow-face posture) is sitting at ease placing the left foot under the right posterior and the hollow of the right foot under the left posterior. *Padmasana* (lotus posture) is sitting with the back of each foot on the upper thigh of the opposite leg. This, O Shandilya, is praised by all [teachers of yoga]. *Virasana* (hero posture) is sitting with the left foot tucked back under the thigh and the right foot placed on the left thigh. *Simahasana* (lion posture) is sitting with the hollows of the heels

pressed against the opposite thighs. [When doing this] rest your hands on the knees, spread the fingers, open your mouth, and gaze straight ahead. *Siddhasana* (perfected or accomplished posture) is sitting with the left heel under the perineum and the right foot above the genitals, concentrating attention between the eyebrows. *Bhadrasana* (happy posture) is sitting with the heels of both feet firmly together at the juncture of the thighs with knees spread and hands placed on the knees or on the ankles. This posture destroys all diseases and poisons. *Muktasana* (free or liberated posture) is sitting with the left heel at the base of the genitals and the right heel on top. (Muktasana is similar to Siddhasana except the left heel is not placed under the perineum.) *Mayurasana* (peacock posture) is accomplished by facing downward toward the ground supported by the palms of the hands, lifting up the head and legs. By these (postures) all diseases within the body are destroyed; all the poisons are consumed. Let the person who is unable to practice all of these postures adopt any of them which may be found to be easy and pleasant. One who masters the postures acquires dominion over the three worlds. A person who is established *yama* and *niyama* (the restraints and the disciplined practices) should practice *pranayama*; by it all the *nadi*s (prana pathways) are purified.

Commentary:

These postures, with the exception of the peacock posture, are for sitting to practice *pranayama* or to meditate. They provide variation and comfort when sitting for extended durations of time, and some of them encourage dormant life forces to become active and flow upward through the chakras. They are best learned from a teacher, although they can also be learned by observing photographs of proficient practitioners. The text informs the reader that one can use any of the seated postures that are "easy and pleasant." Devotees who are not comfortable when sitting cross-legged can sit in a chair to practice *pranayama* or meditation.

The "three worlds" which are mastered by an accomplished practitioner of yoga are the physical, astral, and causal realms.

Pranayama (*pran*, life force; *ayama*, expansion, freeing) practice balances flows of vital force in the body, orders mental processes, clears and purifies the channels (*nadis*) through which life force flows,

enlivens the *chakras*, and awakens (*kundalini)* dormant life force.

Sri Yukteswar was fond of the words of the Bengali devotional chant, *Desire, My Great Enemy* which Paramahansaji translated into English. I here paraphrase the lyrics:

The devotee with a major problem asks God for help:

> Desire, my great enemy, with his soldiers surrounding me; is giving [me] lots of trouble, oh, my Lord.
>
> That enemy I will deceive, remaining in the castle of peace; night and day, night and day, in your joy, O Lord. What will be my fate? O Lord tell me!

The devotee experiences revelation:

> [Let] *pranayama* be your religion [your spiritual practice]; *pranayama* will give you salvation; *pranayama* is the wish-fulfilling tree [that, when requested to do so, grants all constructive desires].
>
> Control that little *pranayama*, become all-pervading *pranayama*. You won't have to fear anything anymore.

The enemy of peace of mind and spiritual awareness is unregulated desire. Its soldiers are all of its supporting thoughts, moods, and tendencies which are described in many yoga scriptures. The first chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* defines them.

Shandilya asked:

By what means are the *nadis* purified? How many are there in number? How do they arise? What *vayus* (vital airs) are located in them? What are their seats? What are their functions? Whatever in the body is worthy of being known, please tell me.

Atharvan replied:

This body is ninety-six digits in length. [A digit is approximately the width of a finger or three-fourths of an inch. Ninety-six digits is approximately 6 feet]. *Prana* extends twelve digits (6 to 7 inches) beyond the body. One who by the practice of yoga reduces the prana

in the body to make it equal to or not less than the fire in it, becomes the greatest of yogins. In humans, the region of fire which is triangular in form and brilliant as molten gold is situated in the middle of the body. Here is the chakra with ten spokes. Influenced by the unbalanced energies of this chakra the *jiva* (soul) wanders, driven by its karma. As a spider scurries to and fro within a web of fine threads, so *prana* moves here. In this (physical) body the soul rides upon prana. Lying at the base of the sushumna is the seat of the coiled *kundalini*. The actions of *kundalini* are restrained because of the soul's involvement with objective life. It closes the opening of *brahmarandhra*, and during the practice of yoga is awakened by the fire; then shines with great brilliancy in the space of the heart in the shape of wisdom. There are fourteen principal *nadis* which serve as major conduits for the flow of *kundalini shakti*. Of them, sushumna is said to be the sustainer of the universe and the path of salvation. It extends from the bottom of the spine to the *brahmarandhra* at the top of the head, is subtle, and has the *shakti* influence of enlivening and of preservation. On the left side of *sushumna* is *ida*, and on the right side is *pingala*. The moon is of the nature of *tamas* and the sun of *rajas*. The poison share is of the sun and the nectar is of the moon. They both indicate time, and *sushumna* is the consumer of time. Other *nadis* extend throughout the body from the spinal pathway. As is a tree leaf covered with minute fibers, so also is this body permeated with *nadis*.

Commentary:

Mention of the human body being six feet tall is only an approximate estimation, as some are taller and some are shorter.

An aura of life force radiates from the body. It can extend much further than six inches from the surface of the body when one is vital or when awareness is expanded, and be considerably diminished when one is ill or awareness is contracted by self-centered preoccupations.

One of the purposes of *pranayama* practice (and lifestyle regimens such as those recommended in the wellness system known as *Ayurveda* or life-knowledge) is to balance *prana* flows in the body, increasing those which are weak and reducing the actions of those which are too forceful; hence the statement referring to reducing

the force of *prana* to the extent that it is equal to or not less than its innate fire (*agni*).

The *prana* frequencies (the ten spokes or rays) of the lumbar chakra located in the middle region of the spine are said to manifest a triangular form. The fire element influence is the "thatness" or true essence (*tattva*) of the third *chakra* (counting from the bottom of the spine). The earth element influence is the true essence of the first *chakra*; the water element influence of the second *chakra*; the air element influence of the fourth *chakra*; and the ether (space) element influence of the fifth *chakra*. Each has its unique *prana* frequency which manifests as sound, light, taste, and aroma. Each has a seed (*bija*) mantra which, when chanted by a practitioner of yoga, can activate the energies of the *chakra*.

Undisciplined mental states and states of awareness can be influenced by *chakra* energies, hence the words "in this (physical) body the soul rides upon prana." Disciplined mental states and states of awareness can have a regulating effect on the actions of the energies of the *chakras*. When a person is influenced by unbalanced energies of the third *chakra*, there is a tendency to be uncertain, to waver and be impulsive. In the first chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* Arjuna, who represents the *third chakra* not yet regulated or under control of the will, is indecisive and influenced by his illusions, instinctual tendencies, and emotions.

The "coiled, dormant potential" in the body is the soul's latent vital force that is to be aroused and allowed to be expressive if awareness is to expand and innate qualities and capacities are to be unfolded. Its energy (*shakti)* is said to be feminine because it is creative, as God's universal energy (Mother Nature or Divine Mother) is said to be feminine because it produces the field of nature. When our awareness is sense-bound, the energy of *kundalini* is restrained and the crown chakra, *sahasara*, in the upper brain is not fully expressive. *Brahmarandhra*, the aperture in the crown of the skull, is said to be closed, and awareness is confined to the body and mind. When diligent yoga practice fans the fire of *kundalini*, soul awareness unfolds and with it wisdom-knowledge blossoms.

Sushumna is the name given to the central channel through which life force flows through the chakras in the spinal pathway when currents of vital forces flow upward, either spontaneously or when directed by such practices as *Kriya Yoga pranayama*. Along

this central channel are the left (*ida*, moon, lunar) and right (*pingala*, sun, solar) channels. When flows of prana are strong through the left channel, we may be inclined to be passive and *tamasic* (dull). When flows are strong through the right channel, we may be inclined to be energetic, discriminating, and goal-directed. For the meditator, excessive right channel prana influence (related to the left hemisphere of the brain) can overly energize the ego-based mental tendencies and "poison" awareness. Left channel *prana* influence (related to the right hemisphere of the brain) can be supportive of meditative contemplation. However, the influence of either flow indicates that awareness is confined to perceptions of events and circumstances occurring in time. When flows of *prana* are dynamic in the central channel, awareness is removed from time-related events and circumstances. That is why it is said that "*sushumna* consumes time."

While we must live in harmony with transient relationships and events, the ideal is to learn how not to cling to "moments which perish" but to be established outside of the flow of time, in eternity. We can do this by providing for ourselves opportunities to experience spiritual independence.

Astral channels (*nadis*) through which life force flows extend throughout the physical body to nourish it and make possible its various functions. When flows of life force are unobstructed and harmoniously influential, psychological and physical health is the normal condition and spiritual growth can be orderly and progressive.

– To be continued

Dialogue

THE PHILOSOPHY, TRADITIONS & PRACTICES OF KRIYA YOGA

Forum themes are requested by our readers. Please use the form we provide with each issue to participate in our open discussions, to let me know your thoughts, to have your questions answered and needs met, and for the benefit of others who read these pages.

How does one grow with others in their community who may have different spiritual paths, and have their support and understanding, and still remain steadfast on one's own path?

We can enjoy friendships with others and respect their chosen spiritual paths without mixing their ideas and practices with our own. It is better to be grounded in our own practices and understanding than to be dependent upon the support and understanding of others. Our spiritual unfoldment is personal, and is best experienced as an inner process rather than discussed with others. We do not need the approval or permission of others to discover our relationship with the Infinite. The great essential is for us to attend to our daily self-care and study and meditation routines. As we awaken to more refined levels of awareness (and when the time comes for us to depart this world) the support and understanding of others is of no value. The only thing that matters then is our degree of enlightenment (our Self-knowledge and relationship with God).

Can you further clarify our involvement with mind and matter because of the interaction of the Spirit of God and God's energy, rather than it being our independent choice?

When the radiance of God interacts with God's energy manifestation of the primordial field of nature (Om, cosmic particles, space, and time) units of Pure Consciousness are individualized. When these become involved with primordial nature (subtle matter) they assume a viewpoint of being somewhat independent of their source. This

process occurs so that life forms can be animated by souls. It is Consciousness' way of producing the drama of relative life: of relationships in the manifested realms.

> I have always meditated with a *japmala*. I have never seen any mention of this in your writings. I thought it was required for beginning meditators?

Japa is a Sanskrit word for repeated speaking or chanting of a mantra or holy name. A *mala* is a string of beads used to either count the number of repetitions or to move through the fingers in sequence with the speaking or chanting. It is a way of being more involved with the process. Some yoga teachers recommend doing this and others do not. It is not a requirement. It is a matter of preference. If you find it helpful, continue your practice. The beads can be of any material. A favorite of some yogis is a japmala strung with rudraksha beads: seeds of a certain plant which are dried before a hole is drilled through them so they can be strung.

> When practicing Kriya Pranayama, should one visualize the cool current ascending with inhalation and the warm current descending with exhalation, or visualize the current going though the chakras? Or should one just do what seems best? Also, how should one meditate when one sees constant movement of light in the spiritual eye?

When practicing Kriya Pranayama, *feel* the current moving. Do this by associating the cool sensation, felt in the throat during inhalation, with spinal path awareness. *Feel* a cool sensation ascending when breathing in, *feel* a mild warmth descending when you breathe out. When you feel a definite surge of energy, which is pleasurable, you can disregard the cool and warm sensations. *Feel* the current ascending and descending through the chakras.

When light is perceived at the spiritual eye, observe it while feeling that you are merging in it. There is no need to speculate whether it is astral light or merely light perception caused by electrical stimulation of the brain. Use it as a focus for your attention. Aspire to merge with and go beyond the light to awareness of pure existence.

One often hears of the positive effects of doing pranayamas, but what are some of the adverse effects and how can they be remedied? What are some effects of meditation (including pranayama) on female physiology?

I have never met anyone who had adverse effects because of practicing pranayamas. Pranayamas should always be practiced gently. There should be no force used and no endeavor to extend practice beyond one's capacity. Temporary inconvenience might be experienced if breathing is too forceful, if too many repetitions are practiced, or if the breath is held too long. I am not aware of any specific effects of pranayama on either the female or the male physiology. Yogis practice pranayama to normalize and balance prana flows in the body, elicit physical relaxation, calm the mind, and awaken dormant vital forces. When practicing pranayamas of any kind, always stay within your range of comfort.

In an earlier issue of *Radiance*, karma is defined as "action." In a later edition, kriya is also defined as "action." Am I missing something?

The words *karma* and *kriya* are both from the Sanskrit verb-root *kri*: to act, do, or make, implying action.

I seem to recall that in one of your writings you mentioned that you are the only living person in the Yogananda Kriya Yoga lineage to play the role of guru. Explain more about this.

Before Master left his body he designated that Mr. J.J. Lynn succeed him as president of Self-Realization Fellowship and be his spiritual representative. Since Mr. Lynn's passing, in 1955, Sister Daya Mata has fulfilled that role. It is SRF's position that Paramahansaji was "the last of the SRF gurus." The members of the board of directors of that organization do not recognize a continuation of transmission of the teaching (and grace) through a succession of gurus and disciples. They say that Master's written words are the guru. They are, of course, entitled to their point of view. However, Master himself, from time to time, privately authorized certain disciples to teach and to initiate students into Kriya Yoga practices. To my knowledge, the few remaining personal disciples of Master who are not affiliated with SRF prefer to "interpret" Master's teachings rather

than to speak from their own understanding and spiritual realization. The important matter is that the transmission continue through qualified representatives.

The words of a God-realized saint can serve to inspire, instruct, and guide, but cannot provide the impact or the transformative influence of a saint's personal guidance and transmission of consciousness and vital force.

> I have read that the practice of one million Kriya pranayamas will result in God-consciousness. Explain how this can be so.

The theory that relates Kriya pranayama practice to spiritual unfoldment is based on the concept that consciousness can express more freely through a responsive brain and nervous system. The flows of life force that move through the spinal pathway and brain during the practice of Kriya pranayama enliven the chakras, refine the nervous system, and restructure the brain. Kriya Yoga gurus say that if a soul could retain the same physical body for one million disease-free years in a wholesome environment with harmonious circumstances, evolutionary forces would refine the physiology to the extent that the soul could effortlessly express its innate divine qualities. With one cycle of Kriya pranayama being the equivalent of one solar year of evolution, one million of them can effect the same transformative changes that would ordinarily occur with the passage of time. Thus, some advanced Kriya practitioners have done one thousand pranayamas a day for three and a half years to accomplish this. With 60 cycles a day, one million can be done in 48 years.

Thankfully, when we begin our spiritual growth practices we are already reasonably conscious and the body provided us by our parents is the outcome of thousands of years of evolution, so we do not have to think in terms of starting from the very beginning. Also, when *kundalini* awakens, transformative flows of vital forces become increasingly influential even when we are not meditating. We do not have to relate our enlightenment to a mechanical meditation process, or think that because we haven't practiced enough pranayamas we cannot awaken to Self-knowledge and God-realization. Besides, I've met a few people who claimed to have practiced more than one million Kriya pranayamas who still had some delusions and illusions to shed.

What is the best way to cultivate devotion to God?

Learn about God, acquire insight into what God is, desire to experience God, and think in terms of letting your sense of independent selfhood be merged in God. Read about some saints. Pray for devotion to be awakened in you.

What is your opinion of the energizing exercises originated and taught by your guru?

Master devised an exercise routine whereby one concentrates at the medulla oblongata at the base of the brain (where the soul's vital force blends with the body) and performs various physical movements along with regulated breathing and muscular tension and relaxation. The purpose is to visualize and feel the life force flowing to the body parts being concentrated upon. Many people enjoy doing the routine and claim to derive benefit. I consider these exercises to be an option, a matter of personal choice, rather than being necessary. Here are a few exercises:

1. Stand upright. With eyes closed, look into the spiritual eye. Put your awareness and feeling at the medulla at the base of the brain. Imagine that you are going to gently will (intend) vital force to flow from there to the various regions of your body.

Inhale deeply through the nostrils. Exhale almost completely. Do this three or four times. With each exhalation, relax the body.

2. Feel that your vital force is pervading the body. Mildly tense and relax the muscles of your body in this sequence. Tense the muscles of the left foot, relax. Tense the muscles of the right foot, relax. Continue doing this with the left calf, right calf; left thigh, right thigh; left buttock, right buttock; lower abdomen; upper abdomen; lower back, upper back; left hand, right hand; left forearm, right forearm; left upper arm, right upper arm; left shoulder, right shoulder; left side of neck, right side of neck; front of neck, back of neck; facial muscles, scalp muscles. When tensing, mildly vibrate the muscles and relax them. Feel that your body is being vitalized with your soul force and with cosmic energy drawn into your body. It is helpful to remember that you, as a spiritual being, are superior to

your mind and body. Your awareness and vital force energize your mind and enliven your body.

3. Bend your head forward. Put both hands behind your head with your fingertips gently pressing the base of the skull in the region of the medulla oblongata. Rotate your fingers three or four times. Maintaining mild pressure, lift your head and tip it back. Release the pressure, dropping your head to the starting position. Repeat three or four times.

4. If you want to, do any free form movements, such as bending your arms as you might do if you were curling a light weight when weight training. With arms down at your sides, perform the curling movement with mild tension as you inhale and energize the arms, then relax, exhale, and return to the starting position. Repeat three or four times.

You can also do this with each leg, perhaps holding onto a chair if necessary to maintain your balance.

For the entire body in two movements, do this: Stand with feet apart and firmly balanced. Bend the knees slightly and relax the muscles of the body. Extend your arms in front of you, with your fists closed. Inhale deeply, spreading your arms wide and mildly tensing the muscles from your feet upward through the legs, trunk, back, chest, arms, and shoulders, straightening your knees as you do this so you are standing tall. Start at the feet and sweep the tension upward in a quick movement so that the entire body is mildly tensed and gently vibrating. Exhale and relax into the starting position, bringing your arms out in front. Do this three or four times. When you breathe in, do so with a double breath: breathe in halfway, and immediately complete the inhalation. Exhale in the same manner. Breathing like this brings in more air and blows it out more completely.

Paramahansaji advised doing a few exercises with concentrated intention, visualization, and feeling-awareness, rather than performing a longer series of exercises in a halfhearted, mechanical way.

For SRF students who have learned these exercises, it is a good idea to do them daily before meditation. Adhering to a helpful routine can support commitment to the spiritual growth path and help to maintain attunement with the teaching and the gurus.

How can one find a living guru?

Before looking for a guru, first be sure you are a receptive disciple (learner). Are you sincere? Are you willing to listen and apply what is recommended? Are you already doing everything you can do to assist yourself to complete well-being? Do you sincerely aspire to awaken to your full spiritual potential in this incarnation? If so, pray for guidance. Pray to God, the true guru. If you are destined to have a personal guru-disciple relationship, it will unfold. Better than looking for a guru is to prepare yourself to be an ideal disciple.

Sri Yukteswar once commented that many people look for a guru made in their own image: a teacher who will satisfy their preconceived ideas of what a guru should be and who will please them rather than do what is necessary to facilitate their psychological transformation. If we want a guru but also want to perpetuate our human condition, very little of real benefit will result from our contact with an authentic guru. When we enter our destined guru-disciple relationship, we must be prepared to forsake all other teachers if asked to do so for our highest good. It is not that a guru wants to dominate or control (a person who wants to do this is not enlightened and should be avoided), it is that the guru wants the disciple to learn the facts of life and demonstrate them. The guru wants the disciple to awaken from all delusions and illusions: to be Self-realized and liberated.

Please provide more information about how to control the *vrittis* when engaged in meditative contemplation.

Vrittis are the wave-like movements occurring in the mind that cause thoughts to surface and the various mental actions, fluctuations, and transformations. When they are disordered, mental confusion results. Also, so long as they persist when we are meditating, our awareness tends to remain fragmented and concentration is difficult. The purpose of meditation practice is to calm mental actions so that they eventually cease. For this to occur, restlessness, cravings, urges, and instinctual impulses have to be pacified.

The easiest way to proceed is to meditate with devotion, aspiring to Self-knowledge and God-awareness and intent upon the meditation process. When we remove awareness from mental activities they

no longer have the support of our attention and become refined, subtle, and stilled. Helpful to removing awareness from mental activities is prayer, mantra, Kriya pranayama, or other meditation techniques.

Devotional chanting and chanting of Sanskrit mantras can also involve our our attention completely, removing awareness from mental processes and emotional states.

When we are totally absorbed in these practices, we cannot at the same time be aware of mental processes. Gentle pranayama before meditation can be helpful.

- Opening your awareness to God's omnipresence is helpful.
- Avoid fighting with your thoughts or moods. Ignore them, and give your attention to that which you want to know and experience.
- You are larger than your mind and are superior to it. Maintain an attitude of calm detachment in relationship to thoughts, memories, and urges.
- When not meditating, maintain an attitude of calm detachment toward your relationships, circumstances, and actions.
- Learn to be centered in awareness of yourself as an immortal spiritual being.
- Avoid daydreaming, fantasy, and emotional disturbance.
- Avoid loud noises, loud, purposeless social conversations, and any other circumstance or situation that disturbs your mental peace and stresses the nervous system.
- Learn the fundamentals of Ayurveda and adapt the practices and routines that will nurture your wellness and balance your basic constitution. If dosha influences (*vata*, air, circulating; *pitta*, fire, biochemical transformation; *kapha*, water, lubricants) are imbalanced it will be difficult to master mental and emotional impulses.
- Resolve emotional conflicts.
- Obtain sufficient rest and regular exercise.
- Choose a balanced, nourishing food plan (refer to Ayurvedic recommendations for this). When your energy levels are high and you have a clear sense of purpose, your mental processes will be more likely to be well-ordered and harmonious.
- Live with intention. When you decide to do something, do it.
- Master your states of consciousness. Now and then, practice the following exercise. Sit upright in a comfortable chair. Close your eyes

and think of going to sleep. As you feel awareness starting to identify with the subconscious sleep state, open your eyes, look straight ahead, and be instantly awake. Pause a few moments and again let your awareness drift toward the subconscious state. Just before going to sleep, open your eyes and be instantly awake. Do this three or four times. This exercise will allow you to know how it feels to experience shifts of states of consciousness. When you meditate, direct your inner gaze to the spiritual eye and let your awareness become more clear as you become receptive to superconscious states. By mastering states of consciousness you can more easily master mental processes.

It can be helpful daily (or weekly) to review your experiences and behaviors of the previous day or week. Do this objectively. If you erred, resolve to do better. If someone (or a circumstance) hurt your feelings, forgive and release. If you need to make better use of your time and resources, decide to do so and be steadfast in your resolve. Conscious, intentional, purposeful living is just as important as philosophical reflection and meditation.

Can you provide more information about Mahavatar Babaji and his role in planetary enlightenment?

The only valid information about Mahavatar Babaji of which I am aware is in Paramahansaji's *Autobiography of a Yogi* and in my book *Life Surrendered in God* (2nd edition, pages 255–259). There are other stories being circulated but the ones I know about seem to me to be derived from untrustworthy sources, or fantasy. I read one story which included a vivid description of Babaji's Himalayan ashram. At the end of the story it was explained that the author had described his own dream experiences.

Since pranayama practice is recommended, what is a good way to keep the nasal passage clear and in a healthy condition so that breathing through the nose is comfortable at all times?

The following excerpt from my forthcoming book *An Easy Guide to Ayurveda*, to be published in August, should be of interest to you:

Some of the functions of the nose are to filter moisture, warm the air that is inhaled, respond to smells, create mucus, allow sinus drainage, and affect the nervous system. The external part of the nose gathers air that is inhaled to the internal regions. The inner walls of the nasal cavity have convoluted structures that stir and circulate the air and mix it with moisture. When we exhale, the moist air rewarms and moistens the lining of the nose that was somewhat dried by the inhaled air.

The nasal lining is covered with a membrane that secretes mucus. Here, dust is collected, along with any bacteria, viruses, fungi, and other small particles which might be present in the air we breathe. The mucus blanket moves upward and back towards the throat where it is swallowed, and it and any potentially harmful microbes are dissolved by digestive enzymes in the intestinal tract. The movement of this coating of mucus is made possible by the constant motion of millions of hair-like structures (*cilia*) growing out of the mucus lining.

Sometimes, however, the mucus in the nose is too thick, becomes dry, and adheres to the cilia and mucus lining. Crusts can then build up, providing a home for microbes such as those which cause the common cold. The opposite condition occurs when the mucus is too liquid and causes watery dripping that prevents the mucus lining from performing its normal function. Inflammation can then occur.

Mucus is both produced and secreted by various parts other than the nasal cavity to serve various purposes. It is also excreted or expelled through the skin, kidneys, bowels, and lungs when it is excessive. Improper diet can contribute to excess mucus that has to be excreted. For many people, excessive use of milk and some starchy foods will create excess mucus.

Small passageways from the sinus to the nasal cavity allow the sinuses to drain their mucus lining. When these become obstructed and free circulation of air and mucus flows are impeded, the sinuses begin to absorb air that creates a partial vacuum. The result is that mucus, blood, and tissue fluids can accumulate, creating irritation, pressure, and pain. This condition is called sinusitis and is often accompanied by headaches.

The nasal cavity can be cleansed by flushing with a mild, warm water solution. Nature already provides small quantities of saline solution in the form of tears that drain from the eyes into the nasal

cavity through the lacrimal ducts, so using a salt water solution for cleansing is really a natural, beneficial procedure. Being able to breathe freely is not only supportive of our physical well-being, it is supportive of our psychological well-being because of the relationship between breathing and flows of life force in the body.

Stir one-quarter teaspoon of salt in body temperature water in a container to be used for nasal cleansing. The container should have a spout that enables you to pour the water into the nostrils. A small tea pot will do (or see availability of a special nasal wash pot listed in the enclosed insert).

Bend forward over a sink, tilting your head slightly to one side. Into the uppermost nostril, insert the spout of the container and let the water flow. It will flow out of the nostril on the opposite side. When the container is empty, refill with salt water solution and repeat the process from the other side. When finished, *gently* blow your nose. While doing this procedure you can breathe easily through your open mouth. The cleansing action will remove dry, thick mucus and moisturize the nasal cavity. If you have had a problem with water draining from your nasal passages to the ears, then do not bend over too far or tip your head.

This procedure can be done anytime a need for it becomes obvious to you. Many people find it especially helpful during dry seasons of the year and when dust and pollen are in the air.

Addendum

When We Care Enough, Blessings Flow

It is important to balance our self-care, philosophical study, and spiritual practice routines with alert interest in effective living and the performance of constructive actions. We are not here to merely endure physical life while hoping to transcend it. We are here to learn to see the reality of God fully expressive in the objective realm. Because the One Consciousness is all-pervading, the fullness of God includes the realm of nature. Because we are individualized units of the One Consciousness, wherever we are in space and time we can be aware of the all-ness of the reality of God.

When we comprehend without illusions the truth about the reality of Consciousness, we can freely and enjoyably live wherever our destiny determines that we be. Monitor your mental states and states of consciousness to be sure that you are daily becoming more cosmic conscious: more expansive and insightful instead of contractive and preoccupied with egocentric concerns. As cosmic consciousness unfolds, remain discerning. Be aware that the reality of God pervades the universe and that all actions of the universe are occurring in perfect harmony in accord with its principles of cause and effect under the influence of evolution. Remain anchored in Self-knowledge so as not to be overwhelmed by the variety of aspects of expressive life that you perceive.

When we care enough about being enlightened (knowledgeable) and playing our destined role in the drama of life, blessings ceaselessly flow. All of the processes occurring in the realm of nature (from the primordial field to the physical realms) are impelled by impulses from the Field of God, the Oversoul, the source of nature and of the blessing-grace that sustains it.

As a Kriya Yoga initiate, besides seeing to your well-being, think in terms of assisting others to Self-knowledge and God-realization. First, always acknowledge the innate divine nature of every person and every creature. The innermost essence of everyone and every living thing is identical to your own. Remembrance of this fact will

help you to be kind to others and to care about their happiness. The ultimate happiness for human beings is experienced when they awaken from the "dream" of mortal existence to awareness of their relationship with the Infinite.

Helpful Things You Can Do

If you have a copy of *The Eternal Way* which explains the inner meaning of the *Bhagavad Gita*, be sure to carefully read it. After reading it, start at the beginning and read a page or two each day. Endeavor to discern the message. Apply what you learn to daily life. The two basic texts for Kriya Yoga devotees of God are the *Gita* and the *Yoga Sutras*. Refer to them often. If you do not yet have a copy of *The Eternal Way*, do not delay in obtaining one. Tell your friends who are intent on spiritual growth about this book.

In August, we will publish *An Easy Guide to Ayurveda*. For this book I revised and expanded the material that was published several months ago in the *Studies in Truth* lesson series. An appendix to the text includes little-known information about the applications of colors, gemstones, metals, and mantras according to ancient traditions and modern discoveries. Sri Yukteswar was accomplished in *Jyotish* (the knowledge and application of light, commonly referred to as Vedic astrology). There are several references to this practice in Master's autobiography. Because so much misinformation about this subject is being currently published, I think it is useful to present a more factual account. Be sure to read *An Easy Guide to Ayurveda* when it is published, then adopt the principles and routines that will be most helpful to you.

If you have access to the Internet, visit our Home Page now and then at *http://web.infoave.net/~csainc*. You can also contact our office by E-mail at *CSAinc@stc.net*. If you have friends on the Internet who are interested in spiritual growth, let them know about our Home Page. We will be adding new information to it.

Refer to page 47 of *Truth Journal* to request free literature from our office. Obtain as much as you can immediately put it into the hands (and hearts) of people you know to be sincerely interested in self-improvement and spiritual growth. We never try to convert or persuade. We are only interested in providing helpful information.

Refer to my travel schedule on the inside front cover of the July-

August issue of *Truth Journal*. If you live in Florida, plan to attend the program in Cape Coral or Tampa in late September of this year (not May as mistakenly printed). If you live in Europe, plan to attend our seminar in Munich the first weekend of November. Note the weekend events scheduled at CSA headquarters through early December.

If you are interested in joining our Pilgrimage to India from mid-February to early March (3 weeks), contact the CSA office for printed information. We will visit several sites related to Paramahansaji's life, as well as other significant places. Our New Delhi publisher, Motilal Banarsidass, will publish an English edition of *Life Surrendered in God* before then.

Information of Interest

You will note on the enclosed order form that we are listing the nasal wash pot mentioned in the *Dialogue* section of this issue. Your price is almost our cost, as a courtesy to you.

Also note that we are offering *Chyavanprash*, the popular herbal mixture used by millions of men, women, and children in Asia for centuries. We obtain it from a manufacturer in the United States and offer it for just $2.00 above our wholesale cost, plus postage or UPS costs for delivery. The small margin of profit is to cover our cost of having the product shipped to us and our packaging for reshipment. Chyavanprash is made with amla fruit (high in vitamin C) and many herbs. It not recommended for use by women during pregnancy or by anyone with diabetes.

Special Occasions to Remember

While a devotee should constantly nurture awareness of the Presence of God, it can be helpful to observe special occasions for deeper contemplation of the Infinite. Use an hour or more on the following dates to remember the teachers of our tradition and attune yourself with their consciousness and mission. Put a picture of the guru being remembered on your altar or on a table where you can see it when you first sit to meditate. Light a candle if you want to. Let your heart overflow with love and appreciation for the blessings that are yours. Meditate long and deep, dissolving in God's Presence.

January 5, 1893: Paramahansa Yogananda's Birthday.

March 7, 1952: Paramahansa Yogananda's Mahasamadhi.

March 9, 1936: Sri Yukteswar's Mahasamadhi.

May 10, 1855: Sri Yukteswar's Birthday.

September 26, 1895: Lahiri Mahasaya's Mahasamadhi.

Sepember 30, 1828: Lahiri Mahasaya's Birthday.

On these special days, read appropriate selections from my writings and Autobiography of a Yogi. You can use the index in Master's book for references to special events. Know that on that day you are in mental and spiritual harmony with thousands of Kriya Yoga devotees the world over. Be open to insight. Feel God's grace flowing through you and around you, blessing you, all people, and world conditions. Be serene and joyful.

Radiance

A Forum for Kriya Yoga Initiates

October – December 1996 Number 10

The Eternal Way

IF YOU WOULD BE A DISCIPLE, DO THESE THINGS

A disciple is a "learner," one who acquires knowledge and wisely uses it. To be an accomplished disciple: 1) grow to emotional maturity; 2) live effectively; 3) die to the world of appearances. You will then be completely responsible for your actions, successful in all endeavors, and untouched by transitory events and circumstances. You will be free.

Light Through the Ages

THE ESSENCE OF THE SHANDILYA UPANISHAD

An continuing examination of a rare yoga text written centuries ago by an ancestor of Lahiri Mahasaya.

Dialogue

PHILOSOPHY, TRADITIONS & PRACTICES

Addendum

OUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS KRIYA YOGA INITIATES

When we were initiated into this tradition and its practices, we were given the gift of grace. It is now our moral and spiritual duty to be intentional on the path and to share this knowledge of soul freedom with other receptive souls.

Thus the knowledge that is more secret than all that is secret has been explained to you by me. Having considered this fully, do what pleases you.

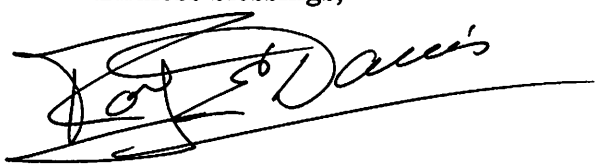
Bhagavad Gita 18:63

Publisher's Note

Radiance, published four times a year, allows me to write on a regular schedule for the benefit of hundreds of Kriya Yoga initiates who have professed their dedication to spiritual growth. If some of what I write seems extreme, let it be known that the initiate path is for devotees who should be willing to hear, to discern, and to grow. In these pages it is my intention to serve "nutritious" spiritual food that will nourish the soul and rid the mind of untruth. I am not writing for a general readership, nor am I sharing pleasant ideas to pacify the reader's mind and emotions.

When you receive each issue of this publication, please read it immediately. Avail yourself of this opportunity to be regularly informed, inspired, and motivated on the discipleship path. From time to time, review past issues. The deeper your attunement with this tradition, the more you will be encouraged to be steadfast in your resolve to embody the truth you know. Valid information is devoid of transformative power unless it is lived. Always sincerely endeavor to live up to your highest understanding. Do not ever doubt your ability to succeed. God in and as you empowers you to do it.

Endless blessings,



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If You Would Be a Disciple, Do These Things

The purpose of discipleship is to enable the devotee to be a *jivan-mukta*: to be soul (*jiva*) liberated (*mukta*, *mukti*, *moksha*) while embodied. Christians refer to this ideal state as salvation: being free from the effects (karma) of past behavioral errors and from present and future misfortune. One is a free soul when all delusions (erroneous beliefs) and illusions (misperceptions) are banished, nothing external is influential, Self-knowledge is permanent, and knowledge and experience of God are constant.

The first stage of spiritual growth that leads to illumination of consciousness is that of awakening from egocentric self-consciousness to awareness of oneself as an individualized expression of the One Consciousness, God. At first, awareness of this fact may be partial, mixed with awareness of conditioned thoughts and feelings. One may then experience a kind of double-awareness: awareness of one's true, changeless nature and, at the same time, awareness of human (mind-body) characteristics. It is at this stage that one is ready for discipleship. Prior to this, awareness is confined to physical, emotional, and mental levels (first, second, and third chakra levels: unconsciousness; dysfunctional consciousness; and functional, self-centered consciousness).

One may then seek knowledge from people with higher understanding or desire to have a relationship with an enlightened guru (teacher). The best relationship, although not always easy to establish and maintain, is with a satguru (a "truth-revealer") who shares his or her realization along with wise counsel. When we are blessed with such a relationship, we should listen, observe, learn, and practice what is taught and demonstrated. Satgurus do not waste their time and energies trying to work with superficial truth seekers or neurotic, emotionally immature individuals. I am occasionally asked to recommend an enlightened guru to people who say they are ready to receive knowledge and be spiritually awakened. They are not yet ready, however, to heed any practical advice I might be inclined to

offer and certainly are not prepared to comprehend or practice the teachings any other enlightened guru might impart. To have a meaningful relationship with a satguru, the ancient saying "when the disciple is ready, the teacher will appear," is true. If a guru-disciple relationship is desired, the best actions to implement are those which prepare one for the relationship. When preparation meets opportunity, success follows.

Sincerely Endeavor to Actualize Self-Responsible Behaviors

No one is perfected until fully awake to Self-knowledge and surrendered in God. Until you are enlightened, at least do your best to actualize self-responsible behaviors. Your honest endeavors to do this will result in emotional maturity, in being responsible for your thoughts, moods, relationships, personal behaviors, goal-directed actions, and circumstances. Self-responsible behaviors will enable you to quickly learn by experience how universal laws of causation work. You will then be aware of the direct relationship between what you do and what occurs in your mind and body and unfolds in your life. You will discover that your awareness of *being* determines everything you experience. Knowing this, you can assist yourself to complete well-being and fulfillment. You will not be able to think of yourself as a victim of external causes or of forces or circumstances beyond your control to satisfactorily adjust.

Through the years, I have noticed that most truth seekers who affirm their sincerity but report little progress tend to behave like uneducated children instead of like mature adults. For them, a major obstacle to functional living and spiritual growth is their arrested emotional condition. For some reason, they have not grown emotionally beyond the stage of narcissistic adolescence. They tend to dramatize self-doubt instead of self-knowledge, insecurity instead of confidence, anxiety instead of trust, uncertainty instead of conviction, and weakness instead of strength. They also tend to be dishonest and manipulative. They think of themselves as personality-beings instead of spiritual beings. They have difficulty coping because they are endeavoring to function with childish (not yet educated and perhaps still in fantasy) behaviors in an adult world.

Such people, even if aspiring to spiritual growth, tend to want a

child-parent relationship with God and are more concerned with what they can get from the relationship than what they can give to it. What every devotee needs to give (surrender) in order to awaken to Self-knowledge is their egocentric sense of selfhood—the primary obstacle to spiritual growth. When enlightened teachers recommend surrender to God, they mean that one's deluded or illusional sense of self (*ahamkara*, thinking and feeling "I exist as an entity independent of God") should be renounced or transcended.

The way to facilitate emotional maturity is to learn the facts of life, directly confront them, and relinquish inappropriate mental attitudes and behaviors while adopting appropriate viewpoints and actions which are life-enhancing and supportive of growth and functional living. Doing this requires that Self-limiting acquired habits of thinking, feeling, and behaving be discarded in favor of rational thinking, emotional stability, and behaviors which free the spirit from bondage to conditioned mental states and addictive tendencies. Behaviors supported by emotional immaturity may have been learned by observation and mimicry (seeing the behaviors of others and consciously or unconsciously imitating them) or as modes of survival. In the first instance, because of insecurity and lack of self-identity, one may assume the attitudes and behaviors of others in order to adapt. In the latter instance, in an endeavor to cope with events and circumstances one may consciously or unconsciously experiment to discover what kind of behavior elicits a favorable response from others. In this way one may learn that incompetence attracts the attention and support of friends and associates who are sympathetic and caring, or that immature behaviors allow one to feel comfortable with and enjoy the company of others who are similarly dysfunctional.

Learn to Live Effectively

For everyone, in all circumstances, effective living is the most accessible and productive spiritual practice (*sadhana*). If one cannot be attentive to "this world" duties, it is unlikely that one will be able to succeed in the subtler realms of abstract thinking, philosophical reflection, and meditative contemplation. I have observed that people who are already living effectively when they begin their spiritual quest, are able to comprehend truth teachings more easily

and apply themselves to how-to-live routines and meditation practices more efficiently. This does not mean that one must be living successfully before embarking on a Self-discovery quest; only that effective living should be included in one's agenda along with philosophical studies and various practices used to facilitate adjustments in states of consciousness. To try to "be spiritual" while remaining at the level of coping, struggling, or performing inattentive, nonproductive, or self-defeating actions, is of little or no value. One may remain for thousands of years, in this and other realms, involved in dysfunctional behavioral modes, and wonder why good intentions and attempts at spiritual growth do not result in worthwhile accomplishment or soul contentment.

Because the laws of cause and effect are operative at all levels (causal, astral, and physical) throughout the universe, we should be able to live as effectively on the earth plane as in the subtle realms. In fact, as we awaken to clear states of consciousness, we discover that we are able to cause effects and attract to ourselves desired circumstances by visualization and intention. With further awakening, we discover that as we remain established in Self-knowledge and God-awareness, we spontaneously think creatively, act decisively and appropriately, and are provided for by the actions of the universe which is responsive to our every need. Regardless of the level at which we are able to function, by being skillful at that level we prepare ourselves to awaken to and function at higher levels.

For motivation to live effectively, a vivid sense of meaning and purpose in life is essential. When our lives are meaningful and purposeful, we are naturally curious, energetic, and creatively involved with worthwhile relationships and activities with thoughtful intention. Living is then enjoyable and satisfying.

Die to the World of Appearances

To "die" to the transitory realm is to be able to relate to it without illusions and attachments. The best preparation for eventual transition from this realm is to come to terms with it now by learning to know it for what it is—a play of lights and shadows, an interaction of cosmic forces with origins in the field of primordial nature (Om, space, time, cosmic particles), which, in turn, originates in the realm of God. To attempt to deny the existence of the physical uni-

verse is as unrealistic as it is to be obsessively attached to it. Instead, read about the categories of cosmic manifestation (in *Life Surrendered in God* and *The Eternal Way*) and contemplate the processes until insight dawns. Perform all actions attentively and skillfully without being attached to your actions or their results. Endeavor to live wholesomely and constructively. Do everything to contribute to your psychological health, physical well-being, and harmonious relationships with nature. Remember that you dwell in an ocean of life and that your relationship is with the Infinite.

Every day, meditate to the stage of superconscious awareness and rest there for as long as you feel inclined to do so. By doing this, you will be detached from mundane circumstances during meditation and will be better able to remain objective when relating to transitory events after meditation. Circumstances in the outer realm are constantly appearing and disappearing. A wise person understands this and does not grieve during occasions of change or overly rejoice when new circumstances arise. The key to free, functional living is to be in tune with the Infinite—in harmonious accord with life's rhythms and flows—and see all things and all that happens as occurring in space and time while you remain stable in knowledge of your changeless reality and the reality of God.

It is not for ourselves alone that we aspire to liberation of consciousness and endeavor to allow it to be actualized; our liberation contributes to the awakening and liberation of all souls and allows more of God's transformative influences into the material realm. Especially in our current time-cycle, during which evolutionary forces are preparing the planet for the emergence of the era of enlightenment which will blossom several thousand years hence, are our personal endeavors to awaken to God-realization of value.

The Essence of the Shandilya Upanishad

This ancient Shandilya Upanishad belongs to the category of Yoga Upanishads which contain esoteric information. Refer to page 7 of issue number 9 for the beginning of this series of commentaries on the text.

Atharvan instructs Shandilya:

Prana, apana, samana, udana, vyana, and various influences of these aspects of vital force, move in all the *nadis* (pathways through which vital forces circulate in the body). *Prana* moves in the nostrils, throat, navel, the two large toes, and the upper parts of kundalini. *Vyana* moves in the ear, eyes, loins, ankles, nose, throat, and buttocks. *Apana* moves in the anus, genitals, thighs, knees, stomach, loins, calves of the legs, navel, and the seat of fire at the base of the spine. *Udana* lives in all the joints and in the hands and legs. *Samana* permeates all parts of the body. Along with the fire in the body, it causes foods and liquid nourishment to be distributed throughout the body. It moves in [all] seventy-two thousand *nadis*, pervading the body along with [transformative] fire. The five vital airs go towards the skin, bones, and other places where they are influential. The *prana* in the navel region transforms foods and liquids into *rasa* (juices) and other components of the digestive process. *Prana*, interacting with *apana*, increases the fire influence in the middle of the body. Then *prana* transforms foods into various components: water, perspiration, urine, blood and other liquids, and waste products. Along with *samana*, *prana* extracts the essence of all the *nadis* and moves in the body in the form of refined life force (*ojas*). The actions of vital forces excrete waste matters through the various body openings. The functions of *prana* are respiration and coughing. Those of *apana* are excretion of waste matters. Those of *vyana* are giving and taking (circulations, separation, disintegration, and resistance to the breaking down of physical systems). Those of *udana* are keeping the body straight (because of the actions of

this upward flowing current). The influences of these five aspects of vital force are instrumental in a variety of ways to make possible processes and actions.

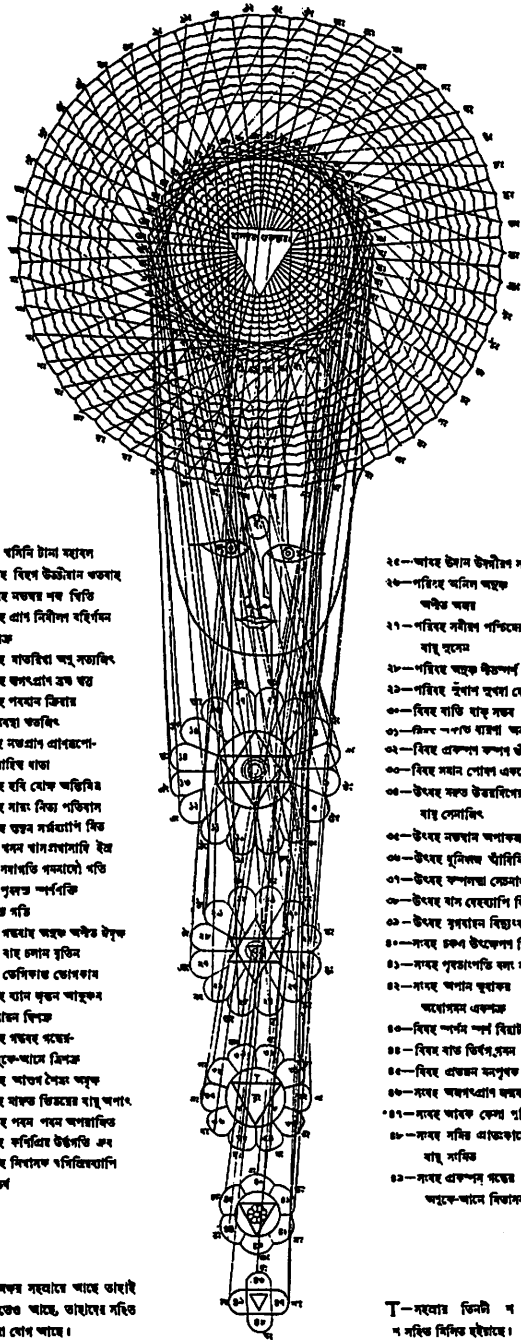
Commentary:

The soul's vital force blends with the physical body at the medulla oblongata. From there it flows to the brain, then down through the *chakras* and into the body to enliven it and perform various functions. *Nadi* is the Sanskrit word for the channel or pathway through which vital forces circulate. For a more complete explanation of the actions of the five aspects of vital force, refer to page 53 and 54 of my book *An Easy Guide to Ayurveda* or to page 66 and 67 of *Life Surrendered in God* (2nd edition). The chart on the following page was prepared by Lahiri Mahasaya, to illustrate the interactions of aspects of vital force between the brain and the six lower *chakras*. The Bengali words explain the 49 influential characteristics of vital force which nurture the body and contribute to actions which occur in it.

Text:

Having thus acquired a thorough knowledge of the *nadis* and the vital forces with their functions, one should begin [*yoga* practice] with purification of the *nadis*. A person established in *yama* and *niyama*, avoiding the company of others, having finished his course of study, delighting in truth and virtue, having conquered anger, being engaged in the service of his guru, and having been obedient to his parents and well-instructed in all of the religious practices and the knowledge of his station in life, should go to a sacred grove abounding in fruits, herbs, and water. There he should select a pleasant abode always resounding with the chanting of the *Vedas*, frequented by knowers of *Brahman* who persevere in the duties of their stations of life. Or in a temple or on the banks of a river or in a village or town, he should build a beautiful monastery. It should be neither too long nor too high, should have a small door, be clean and sanitary, and have every kind of protection. There listening to the exposition of *vedanta*, he should begin to practice *yoga*.

যোগিরাজ শ্যামাচরণ লাহিড়ী মহাশয় প্রবর্ত্ত ষট্‌চক্রের চিত্র।



১—প্রবহ ধনিনি টানা মহাবল
২—পরিবহ বিহগ উল্লীয়ান শুভবাহ
৩—পরিবহ মন্তবহ নভ স্থিতি
৪—পরিবহ প্রাণ নিবীলন বহির্গমন ত্রিশক্র
৫—পরাবহ মাতরিশা অমু সত্যাধিৎ
৬—পরাবহ জলৎপ্রাণ দ্রব ধর্ত্ত
৭—পরাবহ পবমান ক্রিয়ার পরমবহা শুভধিৎ
৮—পরাবহ নভপ্রাণ প্রাণরন্ধ্রপো-ষিৎবাহিত ধাতা
৯—পরাবহ রবি যোক্ত অক্তিবিত্র
১০—পরাবহ নায়ঃ নিত্য পতিবান
১১—পরাবহ তুরুণ সর্ব্বব্যাপি মিত্র
১২—প্রবহ গমন খানপ্রধানাদি ইন্দ্র
১৩—প্রবহ নদাপতি গমনাগৌ গতি
১৪—প্রবহ পুলস্ত স্পর্শপক্তি অমৃত গতি
১৫—প্রবহ গরুবাহ অমৃক অক্ষর ইন্দুক
১৬—প্রবহ বাহ্ চলান মূর্ত্তিন
১৭—প্রবহ ভেসিকাক্ত ভোগকাম
১৮—উৎবহ শ্যাম কৃত্তন আমুকন প্রসারন ত্রিশক্র
১৯—আবহ গরুবহ গন্ধের্ব-অমুকে-আনে ত্রিশক্র
২০—আবহ আতব শৈত্রয় অমৃক
২১—আবহ বাহক ত্রিতয়ের বায়ু অপাৎ
২২—আবহ পবন পবন অপপ্রাণিত
২৩—আবহ কপিপ্রিয় উর্দ্ধগতি ক্রব
২৪—আবহ নিবানক বনিত্রিস্ত্যাপি মূর্ত্তির

২৫—আবহ উদান উদ্বীরন সচ্চৎ
২৬—পরিবহ অনিল অমৃক অক্ষীক অবস্থা
২৭—পরিবহ নবীরন পশ্চিমের বায়ু সুসেম
২৮—পরিবহ অমৃক ঈক্তস্পর্শ পনাীক
২৯—পরিবহ নুবাণ সুখদা মেবমেব
৩০—বিবহ বাতি বায়ু সম্ভব
৩১—ত্রিবহ স্পর্শত ধারণা অনাবিত্র
৩২—বিবহ প্রকম্পন কম্পন ভীম
৩৩—বিবহ সমান পোষণ একজ্যোতি
৩৪—উৎবহ সমস্ত উত্তরদিগের বায়ু সেনাধিৎ
৩৫—উৎবহ নভযান অপাকর অভিমুক
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৪৮—সংবহ সমিত প্রাক্তকালের বায়ু সমিত
৪৯—সংবহ প্রকম্পন গন্ধের অমুকে-আনে নিত্যাসন

যে অক্ষর সহযোগে আছে তাহাই ইহা চন্দ্রকেও আছে, তাহাদের সহিত রেখা দ্বারা যোগ আছে।

T—সংযোগ তিনটী শ মূলাধারের শ সহিত মিলিত হইয়াছে।

Commentary:

One who desires to engage in intentional spiritual practices is advised to first acquire valid information about the relationship of the soul to the mind and body, and the actions of the soul's vital forces in the body. Further, one should understand the purpose of the *yamas* (restraints or self-controls: harmlessness, truthfulness, honesty, conservation and transformation of vital forces, and detachment) and *niyamas* (the "not-restraints" or constructive actions: purity, contentment, processes for psychological transformation, study and contemplation of one's true nature and Supreme Consciousness, and surrender of self-consciousness to God-consciousness) and adhere to them. To avoid the company of others means to avoid being influenced by egocentric people whose only interest is in perpetuating their ignorance and satisfying their whims and base desires. The recommended course of study for a devotee is one which provides sufficient knowledge to live righteously and be competent to engage in spiritual practices.

One who abounds in truth and virtue has a *sattvic* (pure) nature. Anger is conquered by cultivating humility and patience, and by renouncing unreasonable expectations. To be engaged in service to the guru is to heed the guru's instructions and be attuned with his or her states of consciousness, mental states, and ideals. If the devotee does not have a personal guru relationship, then the guru, the teacher and truth-revealer, is God alone. The reference to being obedient to one's parents refers to the usefulness of having learned from their counsel and example and of having a harmonious relationship with them. To know one's station in life is to be aware of the purpose for being in the world and how best to fulfill it. The reference to selecting a place in a natural setting to engage in spiritual practice is advice given for persons who choose to retreat from secular involvements for a duration. If others are in the area, they should be likewise engaged in spiritual practices; hence the reference to hearing words of truth from revealed scriptures (*vedas*) and being in the company of knowers of *Brahman* (Supreme Consciousness). If not in a completely secluded environment, one is advised to have a modest, comfortable, secure dwelling place in which to live and engage in study and meditation practice. This can be a house or an apartment in a quiet neighborhood. If personal instruction from an

enlightened teacher can be "listened to," this can be helpful. Otherwise one can read words of truth which comprise the essence of all revealed teachings (*vedanta*). The ideal is to be well-prepared for philosophical enquiry and spiritual practice and to have an environment which is supportive of this endeavor.

Text:

Having worshipped The Remover of All Obstacles, he should salute his *ishtadevata* and sitting in any of the meditation postures on a soft seat, facing either the east or the north and having conquered them, the learned devotee keeping his head and neck erect and fixing his gaze at the spiritual eye, should see the sphere of the moon there and drink the flowing nectar. Inhaling the air through the left nostril, he should contemplate the sphere of fire in the navel as surrounded with flames and exhale through the right nostril. Inhaling through the right nostril and retaining it, he should exhale through the left nostril. For the chosen duration, he should practice six times at every sitting, morning, noon, and evening. By this practice, the *nadis* become purified. The body then becomes light and bright, the gastric fire is increased, and there is the manifestation of *nada* (internal sound).

Commentary:

When beginning meditation practice, the devotee is advised to acknowledge God as the remover of all obstacles to contemplation and *samadhi* (superconscious realization). A devout Hindu may have in the meditation chamber a statue of *Ganesha*, the elephant-headed god, as a reminder that God contains all knowledge, and indeed the universe. For others, merely to acknowledge God as supreme is sufficient. One's *ishtadevata* is one's preferred aspect of deity for worship or contemplation (*ish*, to wish, seek; *devata*, a divinity), to which one prays or which is concentrated upon. Sitting toward the north or the east is believed to put the mind and body in a harmonious relationship with the earth's magnetic currents, thus "conquering them" or having their support. The "sphere of the moon" seen in the spiritual eye is the light perceived when mental actions are calm. The "flowing nectar" is the essence of consciousness that nourishes

the body when superconscious states are experienced. One can practice the simple *pranayama* routine of alternate nostril breathing to encourage balanced flows of vital force and awaken dormant soul forces. When these are active, the body is vitalized and the sounds of life force frequencies of the *chakras* can more easily be heard in the inner ear or as resounding inside the head.

Text:

Pranayama is said to be the union of *prana* and *apana*. It is three kinds—exhalation, inhalation, and cessation. For practicing *pranayama*, they are associated with the letters of the Sanskrit alphabet. Therefore *pranava* (Om) only is said to be the *mantra* for *pranayama*. Sitting in the chosen meditation posture, one should meditate on Om. Drawing the air through the left nostril, one should meditate on the sound of A, on the sound of U during the moments of pause, and the sound of M when exhaling through the right nostril. One should practice in this way repeatedly.

Then having become firm in his meditation posture and preserving perfect self-control, to remove the impurities from sushumna the yogi should retain the inhaled air for as long as comfortable before exhaling it through the opposite nostril. For those who practice in this way the *nadis* become purified within three months. One should practice cessation of the breath at sunrise, midday, sunset, and at midnight until he accomplishes eighty repetitions a day for a period of four weeks. In the early stages, perspiration is produced; in the middle stage there are tremors of the body; and in the last stage the body levitates in space. When perspiration arises, it should be massaged into the skin. By this, the body becomes firm and light. In the early course of practice, food with milk and ghee is excellent. There will then be no burning sensation in the body as a result of practice. As with attentive care creatures are tamed, so also the breath, when rightly managed, is eventually regulated.

Commentary:

Om is pronounced as a contraction of the Sanskrit letters A, U, and M. When practicing this *pranayama* routine, *Om* can be mentally "listened to" to improve concentration and nurture devotion.

With inhalation, listen to the start of *Om* resonating in your field of awareness. Listen to the continuous sound during pauses, and the conclusion of the sound with exhalation. The durations of pause after inhalation and after exhalation should be only as long as is comfortable. There should be no attempt to forcibly restrain the impulse to breathe. When one is relaxed and quiet, breathing will be gentle and the pauses will be longer. During the intervals of nonbreathing, mental processes will be subtle or completely stilled, affording the practitioner the opportunity to experience conscious thoughtlessness.

Practicing 20 rounds (inhaling through the left nostril, pausing, exhaling through the right nostril, pausing, then repeating in reverse order, is one round) four times a day at 6 hour intervals is suitable for devotees for whom this schedule is convenient. For the average person, two or three sessions is sufficient.

The physical sensations vary from person to person. Some people do not experience any physical reaction. Others experience an increase of body temperature and, sometimes, light perspiration. The reference to levitation of the body is in accord with the sometimes phenomena of *shakti* (active energy of *kundalini*) being awakened by *pranayama* practice, causing involuntary thrusting movements of the lower limbs that can force the body upward, resulting in a hopping effect rather than actual levitation or hovering above the meditation seat. While *shakti* awakening is of value, the physical movements (if any) are of no importance to one whose aspiration is to experience transcendent states of consciousness.

Perspiration massaged into the skin softens it and improves the complexion. When one is engaged in regular *pranayama* practice, and especially when movements of *shakti* are evident, it is advisable to partake of a light but nutrition-rich diet. Milk and ghee (clarified butter) are recommended as supplements to the regular diet. Ayurvedic literature describes a variety of *rasayanas* (nutritious, rejuvenating foods and herbs), including milk and ghee, that are especially recommended for anyone engaged in intensive spiritual practices which cause rapid physiological changes.

Text:

When the *nadis* have been purified by the regular practice of *pranayama*, life force easily moves upward through *sushumna*. By the contraction of the muscles of the neck and the anal sphincters, vital force goes into *sushumna*. Drawing the vital force upward, the yogi free from old age becomes like a youth of sixteen. Breathing through both nostrils and drawing the vital force upward, exhale through both nostrils. By this, hunger, thirst, lethargy, and sleepiness do not arise.

Commentary:

Here, reference is made to the chin lock (closing the throat and bending the head forward) and the root lock (contracting the sphincters of the anus while lifting the lower abdominal region upward). These are practiced when doing *maha mudra* and when practicing other preliminary techniques to encourage the awakening and upward flowing of vital force through the central spinal pathway (*sushumna*). Drawing the vital force upward with inhalation and sending it downward with exhalation is the main *pranayama* practice of Kriya Yoga initiates. It is not fully described in the text because it is primarily taught in the oral tradition, from guru to disciple or teacher to student to ensure correct practice and to allow for the opportunity of *shaktipat* (awakening of vital force assisted by the guru).

Text:

Now we shall proceed to *kumbhaka* (restraint of breath and vital force). It is two kinds—that which is accompanied by breathing and that which is devoid of the actions of breathing. Until you are accomplished in the isolation of stillness, practice with regulated breathing. To one who has mastered breathlessness, there is nothing unattainable in the three worlds. By this, knowledge of *kundalini* unfolds. The body becomes lean, clear-eyed, of serene countenance, vital forces flow upward, and gastric fire is increased.

Commentary:

Natural, temporary suspension of breathing occurs when practicing the alternate nostril *pranayama* procedure and when practicing *Kriya Pranayama*. When the body is at rest, the vital forces are balanced, and the *shakti* of *kundalini* is stable in the crown chakra, breathing may be minimal or may cease for a duration. This "breathless" state is only a symptom of internalized attention and is not absolutely essential for *samadhi* (superconscious states). It is quite possible to slow, and temporarily stop, breathing by self-suggestion alone, without superconscious awareness, and it is possible to experience Self-knowledge and God-realization without cessation of breathing. The "isolation" to experience is that of Self-identity independent of the support of mental or physical processes.

Text:

Focusing attention on an inward object of contemplation with open eyes is a secret *tantric* technique. With mind and breath absorbed in the internal object, one sees with the inner eye. This is called *kechari mudra*. Then the seat [origin] of the actions of preservation of nature is revealed. With eyes half closed and with firm concentration, fixing the gaze in the spiritual eye and becoming absorbed in the sun and moon, remaining firmly established in meditative contemplation, the *yogi* becomes aware of the light which is free from all externals, is resplendent, and is the truth which transcends all. O Shandilya, know this to be *Tat* (That, the Supreme Reality). Merging the sound in the light and elevating the brows a little results in the state of mind-transcendence. Therefore one should practice this technique. He then experiences *sabikalpa samadhi*. To one who accomplishes this, time does not exist.

Commentary:

Kechari mudra means "with one's consciousness free in space" technique. When one's consciousness is thus free, whether one's eyes are open or closed is irrelevant because intuitive (direct) perception (the inner eye) transcends the senses. One can then see (know) the heart of Reality from which the realms of nature are emanated. Drop-

ping the eyelids to shut out externals, the devotee is advised to look into the spiritual eye to see the focused light of the converged *pingala* (sun) and *ida* (moon) currents as they flow upward to meet at the medulla oblongata and are reflected in the *ajna chakra* (the spiritual eye center). The brilliant white light is to be contemplated as representing the light of the Transcendent Pure Consciousness. The devotee then merges the sound of Om with the light, concentrating on lifting vital forces upward (sometimes accompanied by upward movement of the brows), and removes awareness from involvements with mental processes. Merging awareness with the object of concentration results in superconsciousness (*samadhi*) with the support (*sabikalpa*) of the object with which awareness is identified. One is not aware of time or any other aspect of nature. This *samadhi* is preliminary to the transcendent realization without the support of an object (*nirbikalpa samadhi*).

Text:

Placing the mind in the midst of *shakti* and *shakti* in the midst of the mind and looking on the mind with the mind, be happy. Place the *Atma* (the Self) in the midst of *akasha* (space) and *akasha* in the midst of *Atma*, and having reduced everything to *akasha*, do not think of anything else. Abandoning all thoughts, become abstract awareness itself. As salt in water becomes absorbed, so also awareness becomes absorbed in the *Tattva* (Thatness; true essence). What is termed [the contents of] *manas* (mind; thinking principle) is the knowledge of everything that is known and its clear apprehension. When the knowledge of an object and the object cognized are both absent, that is the only path [for the *yogi*]. By giving up all cognition of objects, it (the mind) is illumined, and when the mind is illumined, *kaivalya* (isolation, awareness of the Self alone) remains.

Commentary:

Putting awareness in the creative force and feeling that the creative force pervades awareness, one should be Self-aware and happy. Then one should feel oneself to be dissolved in space (God's omnipresence) and formless Reality to be the essence of the Self. All thoughts should be abandoned in favor of experiencing pure aware-

ness of being. So long as we are aware of ourselves in relationship to things (objects, thoughts, feelings) we are in a state of relative consciousness. The transcendent realization is devoid of any sense of independent selfhood and of things to be examined or understood.

Text:

For the dissolution of *chitta* (individualized awareness), there are two ways—*yoga* and *jnana*. Yoga is the *nirodha* (turning back to their origins and cessation of modifications and fluctuations) of the mind. *Jnana* (the way of flawless knowledge) is inquiry into the contents of the mind and other objects of knowledge. When the modifications of the mind are quieted, mental peace results. Just as the actions of people [engaged in daytime work routines] cease at sunset, so when the fluctuations of the mind cease, the cycles of births and deaths come to their end. When one has no longing for mundane existence or when all desires have been satisfied, the fluctuations of *prana* cease. This may be accomplished by the study of scriptures, the company of good associates, indifference to sense pleasures, practice of *yoga*, long contemplation with alert intention on any desired object of concentration, or by firm adherence to living in accord with the principles of truth.

Commentary:

When the fluctuations of prana cease, when we are peacefully established in Self-knowledge, our awareness is removed from all disturbing conditions and the state of "living free" is accomplished. The text describes several ways to this end.

– to be continued

The Philosophy, Traditions & Practices of Kriya Yoga

Forum themes are requested by our readers. Please use the form we provide with each issue to participate in these open discussions—to let me know your thoughts, to have your questions answered and needs met, and for the benefit of others who peruse these pages.

Why are there so many variations of Kriya meditation techniques taught by teachers who claim to represent this tradition?

Some authentic teachers explain the techniques according to how they were taught by their teacher. Variations are sometimes taught because gurus discover subtle practices which work for them. There are also some people who claim to represent this tradition in spite of the fact that they were not authorized to do so. They claim they "feel led to do so" or had a "vision" or "revelation." You can always determine what is worthwhile by finding out who authorized the teacher, whether the teacher is enlightened and selfless, or is teaching for ego satisfaction or for monetary gain. It would not be appropriate for me to mention names of persons who are not authorized representatives of this tradition in spite of their claims. You can always telephone me for clarification if you want to know what I know about the situation.

Why not do a commentary explaining the similarity between some of the teachings in the *New Testament* and those of the yoga tradition? This might be helpful for we who were raised in a Christian tradition. What about the "revelations" of Saint John at the end of the New Testament—can they be explained in the light of yoga teachings?

The easiest approach is to read the New Testament to discover teachings that are compatible with those of yoga texts such as the

Bhagavad Gita and Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*. When comparing the words of enlightened people, there will always be a common thread to be observed. Sri Yukteswar quoted selections from the *New Testament* in his book *The Holy Science* for the purpose of making readers aware of underlying truths in various scriptures. While verses 12 to 17 of the first chapter of the *Revelation of Saint John* seem to describe the chakras and astral body, much of the other material that is included is debated even among Bible scholars. We can, of course, interpret the symbolism to satisfy our mind, but there is no way to know what John's state of consciousness was when he had his experiences or exactly what he was endeavoring to convey when he wrote about them. Nor can we know whether or not the account was altered by later writers to suit their own purposes. If what is recorded is an accurate representation of what was experienced, it indicates that John was experiencing a meditative state mixed with much mental imagery, rather than a clear superconscious state which is the ideal for Kriya Yoga devotees.

Do the words "soul" and "spirit" have the same meaning?

In yoga literature, a soul is described as a spiritual being identified with matter and mind to the extent that it mistakenly feels and believes itself to be independent of God. At the core of soul awareness, behind the layers of delusion (unknowing), is the pure, individualized spirit of God. In many religious writings, the words soul and spirit are interchangeably used when the writer is referring to individualized spiritual beings. It is the soul aspect that needs to be liberated; the immortal essence is always pure consciousness. Removing our awareness from the erroneous mental idea of being apart from God is the basis of meditation practice and of intellectual discrimination: the way of direct experience and flawless knowledge. Direct experience (realization) results in immediate knowledge, and discriminative insight provides an opportunity for the acceptance of what is known so that direct experience is possible. The distinction between unmodified consciousness (spirit) and modified awareness (soul) should be analyzed until clearly comprehended.

How can I improve my prosperity consciousness? I'm not grasping or greedy, I just want to easily have what I want and need so I can do things that are worthwhile and, when inclined, be helpful to others.

When our consciousness (awareness, conviction, acceptance) of prosperity (of thriving, flourishing, and being successful in all ways) is pronounced, we can experience fulfillment in all aspects of our lives, including spiritual growth. When it is lacking, we are inclined to experience limitations and frustration. Here are several practical things to do to be prosperous:

- At the conclusion of your meditation session, when you are calm and fulfilled, sit until your awareness (and feeling) is that of wholeness. Know and feel that there is no separation between you and God and no separation between you and the substance of which the universe is formed. Remind yourself that as you are relaxed and in harmony with life's processes, you are included in the actions of Universal Mind and evolutionary forces. Know that all of your needs are provided for and that your worthwhile desires can be easily fulfilled. Remain sitting until you are firmly established in this awareness; until there are no doubts remaining.
- Envision yourself to be spiritually aware, whole, healthy, skillfully functional, and successful in every way. Envision wholeness, oneness, abundance. Continue doing this until there are no longer any thoughts or feelings of lack or limitation. Be stable in awareness of wholeness at all times.
- If what you need or want does not immediately manifest, and you are certain that you are on the right course, exercise intention to facilitate the manifestation process: gently will it to happen. Avoid egocentric willfulness. Work from soul-level awareness. Intention is more effective when introduced into the creative process with certainty. Doing this does not require emotionalism. Then do what you can to assist the fulfillment process. When necessary, be patient while circumstances work out in your favor. If you do not find it easy to visualize desired outcomes, just feel good about the fact that your unplanned good fortune—appropriate, supportive relationships, timely events, and necessary material things—will unfold.
- Examine your habitual thoughts, mental attitudes, feelings, personal behaviors, relationships, and modes of accomplishing work or

projects. What do you think about most of the time? How do you think: are you habitually optimistic or pessimistic, and do you habitually think in terms of limitation or in terms of accomplishment and fulfillment? How do you habitually feel about yourself? Are your personal behaviors intentional and orderly—or do you allow yourself to be influenced by small-minded thoughts, whims, urges, and moods? With what kind of people do you habitually associate? Are they optimistic, healthy-minded, emotionally stable, functional, successful people? Choose to associate with prosperous people. If you cannot conveniently do it, at least model your life in accord with what you know to be the ideal way to live. Be skillfully efficient in the performance of work and in accomplishing whatever it is you want (or need) to do. Avoid waste, impulsiveness, and obligating yourself to have relationships or to do things which are nonproductive. Use your time, energy, and resources (including money) wisely and effectively. Do not withhold yourself from life. Is your attitude contractive or expansive—are you small-minded or large-minded? Cultivate large-mindedness and cosmic consciousness.

- Observe your habitual thoughts and attitudes to see if you are harboring self-limiting beliefs and opinions about yourself and about material things and circumstances. Do you think a life of poverty or limitation is pleasing in God's eyes? Do you resent the affluence and good fortune of others who are demonstrating fulfillment? Do you believe karma or astrological influences determine your life? When you discover attitudes, beliefs, or opinions which are restrictive, replace them with constructive attitudes and knowledge. Erroneous beliefs are delusions. Renounce them.

Sometimes my meditations flow nicely and are satisfying. At other times my mind is restless, and personal and business circumstances seem to demand my attention and interfere with my attempts to meditate. Any suggestions about this situation?

Whatever you do, do it with intention. Be aware in the moment. Do what needs to be done at that moment. When you sit to meditate, dismiss from your mind all thoughts and concerns which do not relate to the purpose of your meditation practice. When meditating, give your full attention to what you are doing and to what is occurring. Begin with acknowledgment of God and your innate, divine

nature. Proceed according to your plan or your inspiration of the moment. If you pray, do so with selfless devotion. Use the preliminary meditation techniques you know to be helpful: mantra, breath awareness, simple pranayama, and the advanced Kriya meditation routines. Dissolve your sense of independent selfhood in the ocean of all-pervading Consciousness. Your mundane circumstances can be confronted more effectively after deep, soul-refreshing, meditation practice. Even when you are not able to abandon yourself to meditation, at least adhere to your routine, practice Kriya pranayama, and sit in the aftereffects tranquility that results. If thinking persists, at least think of your relationship with God and the gurus. Contemplate your relationship with the Infinite.

Other than "seeing" the innate divinity of a retarded child (or of any person in any confined situation) are there any other things I can do to help draw out their best qualities and functional abilities? Also, at what age should children be introduced to meditation practice? What is the best way to teach them so they will be receptive to learning and practice?

While being supportive in practical ways to the extent possible, endeavor to communicate at the soul level. Know that the innate reality of every person is pure spirit. Know that the existing condition is temporary. If the individual's brain or nervous system is impaired, know that inwardly they are aware and that their soul destiny is to eventually unfold and express. If this cannot be accomplished through the present body, it will be accomplished in the astral realm or in a future physical incarnation.

Children can learn to meditate when they are sufficiently interested in doing so. Start with only a few minutes of sitting in the silence, practicing breath awareness or using a pleasant word or word phrase for focusing. Mention the benefits of relaxation, calmness, peacefulness, and inner happiness. Demonstrate the procedure and practice with the child. Be a good role model, expressing relaxed, calm, pleasant behavior.

Why do some devotees seem to easily experience the awakening of shakti, while some others find it difficult to have the experience?

Shakti, the energy of kundalini, manifests more easily in some bodies than in others. There are some functionally competent people

who have much knowledge but little or no manifestations of shakti, and others who are functionally competent and knowledgeable who also experience obvious shakti manifestations. There are also some dysfunctional, unintelligent people who experience various degrees of manifestations of shakti—which may or may not be transformative. Kriya Yoga devotees can prepare themselves for the awakening of kundalini and its consequent shakti manifestations by cultivating devotion to God (or aspiration to enlightenment), wholesome, constructive thinking, and practice of Kriya Yoga meditation techniques. As mentioned in the Shandilya Upanishad and other yoga texts, pranayama practice, improved awareness of the vital centers (chakras), and deep meditation encourage the awakening of shakti. Some devotees experience strong movements of vital forces in the body and others do not. More important than obvious energy manifestations in the body are mental calm, Self-knowledge, and increasing awareness of the reality of God.

I need a healing of a serious physical condition. What should I do? How did Paramahansa Yogananda advise people who needed healing?

It's always a good idea to get more than one opinion about the condition from physicians who have a holistic approach to treatment, and consider their advice. When possible, learn the underlying cause (or causes) of the condition and remove them, rather than be satisfied with merely suppressing symptoms. When possible, utilize the most natural approach available.

Acquire information about the spirit-mind-body relationship and harmonize these relationships. If an understanding of your basic mind-body constitution (see my book *An Easy Guide to Ayurveda*) is needed, acquire it. Work from the level of spiritual awareness and modify your mental and emotional states and personal behaviors as necessary. Adopt a balanced lifestyle, with a regular schedule of rest and activity. Choose a food plan that is most suitable to your needs. Eliminate worry and anxiety. Manage stress. If you have an emotional conflict with anyone, or because of personal circumstances, make peace with others and with your circumstances. Cultivate an "I am on friendly terms with a friendly, supportive universe" attitude. If medical intervention is required, choose the best treatment and trust in the goodness of life and in God for ideal results.

For teeth and gum problems, inquire until you locate a dentist who practices holistic procedures. Your experience will be more pleasant and the results more satisfying.

Do not discuss your condition with anyone other than the qualified person you choose to assist you to wellness. You do not need sympathy and you certainly do not need the misguided or negative opinions and comments of others. Nor is it of any benefit to have other people worrying about you or talking about your situation among themselves.

If you want to request prayer support as a supplement to the practical things you do, request it of a spiritually aware person only. Do not ask well-meaning friends or associates who are not themselves established in wholeness consciousness to pray for you. Recent research involving patients receiving health care attention indicates what religious people have known for centuries: that prayer and positive thinking, by the patient and by others for the patient, are supportive. Hospitalized patients who were not even aware that they were being prayed for, experienced fewer complications following surgery and healed faster than did those who were not selected as prayer subjects.

The ideas offered here are those which Paramahansaji would approve. My guru was an exponent of what he referred to as "plain living and high thinking." He emphasized a natural approach to living while acknowledging the helpful role of physicians and others knowledgeable about matters relating to wellness and function.

On one occasion Paramahansaji told of a man who requested healing for back pains. After talking with him for a while, Master referred him to someone he knew in the community who specialized in helping people have their posture restored to normal. It was discovered that the man with back pains had one leg that was short, causing structural imbalance. When the shoe worn on the foot of that leg was fitted with an insert to balance his posture, the man's back pains ceased. He then told anyone who would listen, about his guru's great healing powers! When Master told the story he emphasized that practical measures can often very easily and quickly accomplish desired purposes.

To facilitate healing of any condition it is most helpful to work from a level of spiritual awareness, attuned with God, rather than from levels of conditioned consciousness. When you can know and

inwardly "see" desired outcomes as being possible—and more real than conditions which challenge—they can easily come into manifestation. Always remember that you, as a spiritual being, are superior to your mind and body and to environmental circumstances. You are an immortal being, and the realm of nature is a manifestation of cosmic forces occurring in the consciousness of God.

I have been practicing Kriya Yoga meditation techniques for several years and cannot report that any obvious spiritual growth has occurred. What can I do to experience satisfying results?

Practice the procedures, reinforced by devotion to God. Mechanical practice can be helpful, but practice of meditation techniques as a devotional exercise is much more effective.

Dr. Herbert Benson, of Harvard University, who years ago wrote *The Relaxation Response* in which he described how to meditate with a word or word phrase to focus attention, recently wrote that, of the people he taught how to meditate, the ones who had the most satisfying results through the years were those who chose to include meditation along with their religious practices.

With mantra, stay with it until your attention is interiorized, you are absolutely still, and the mantra drops away. Master often said that one could experience samadhi by mantra practice alone. When thoughts cease and awareness is clear, samadhi (superconsciousness) prevails. Then what is needed is repeated episodes of that conscious, clear, tranquil state. This is what it means to practice yoga (samadhi) until you are established in it.

When you practice Kriya Pranayama, do so with complete attention. Pull the current up with inhalation and let it flow down with exhalation. Feel that you are "breathing" through sushumna nadi, the central pathway in the spine. Do as many as you routinely do. For the last one, pull the current up, continue to gaze into the spiritual eye, and plunge into meditation with surrendered abandonment. Dissolve your personality-self in space, in God. Be there for a long time. Give yourself to the experience. Have no anxiety about the outcome. Do not analyze your experience. When you begin to come out of the quiet state, do Jyoti Mudra and again plunge into the spiritual eye, extending your awareness into the Infinite.

Many Kriya devotees don't have satisfying experiences during

meditation practice because they don't involve themselves completely enough in the processes. They are too passive, too emotionally needy. You are a radiant spiritual being. Act like one!

When not engaged in meditation practice, live with intentional purpose. Kriyas are constructive actions of all kinds, not just meditation actions. Kriya yogis are supposed to adhere to dharmic principles, those which keep them in harmonious accord with all of life's processes. Living like this is supportive of us. It enables us to accomplish all of our worthwhile purposes and fulfill our destiny of liberation of consciousness.

Always be aware of your relationship with God and with the gurus of our teaching tradition. Avoid thoughts, moods, relationships, and behaviors which bind you to ordinary, human conscious states. If you insist on thinking and living like a sense-bound, self-conscious being with only faint hopes for enlightenment, authentic spiritual growth will not occur. If you wander from the straight path, you will become confused. If you try to mix these teachings and practices with opinions and practices of unenlightened teachers, your mind will be poisoned with invalid ideas and your awareness will be conflicted and clouded.

Be responsive to the recommendations given in each issue of this publication. Use the participation form to ask questions or make inquiries so that your understanding can improve and you can be motivated to dedicated living. On average, less than five percent of the readers of *Radiance* send in the participation form. Unless you are already involved with another guru or organization of our Kriya Yoga tradition, be involved with me and Center for Spiritual Awareness activities and projects. Read every publication we offer. Every initiate who reads these words should read *The Eternal Way* at least once and should refer to it often. I know this is not the situation because not everyone on the *Radiance* mailing list has even ordered the book yet. Everyone should also read *An Easy Guide to Ayurveda*. I write books and articles to provide fresh inspiration and useful insights. Take advantage of your opportunities to acquire this information and make it your own by applying it with conscious endeavor.

If thoughts of God and the gurus are not in your mind when you first awaken from sleep, train yourself to think of God and the gurus when you awaken, during the day regardless of what you are doing, and as you go to sleep at night. Attune yourself with this great work

and you will experience noticeable support and more energy. You will have knowledge and conviction of meaning and purpose for your life. Without knowledge and conviction of meaning and purpose, there is loneliness, fear, and despair—and these conditions do not have to exist for us.

Banish laziness. Perform all actions skillfully. Then when you meditate you will do so with enthusiasm and proficiency. Just do what you know is best for you to do and let the results unfold. Be not attached to your actions or to their results. If I were attached to my ministry actions, knowing as I do that only a fraction of the total number of people who read my writings or hear me speak understand what I am endeavoring to communicate (and even fewer try to help themselves), I would be a psychological mess. I do what I do because it is my calling, my duty. I have no personal goals for which I have to work. There is nothing that I want to accomplish for ego satisfaction or to impress anyone. Except for occasions of rest and recreation, all of my thoughts, energies, time, and actions are given to this work. My life is meaningful because I understand my role in it and am playing my role so that God can fulfill higher purposes through me. I do not indulge in simplistic metaphysical speculation or purposeless philosophical talk. I remain open to guidance, think rationally, and act decisively. I wholeheartedly recommend this way of life to you. It results in more than human happiness which is precarious and transient; it enables one to experience the bliss (serene contentment) of absolute being.

Embodied life is of relatively short duration. We are here for but a few score years and then move on, either to continue our learning and growing or to awaken from involvement with the realm of nature. It is possible to be spiritually awake and free while here on Planet Earth. Kriya Yoga devotees should consider these facts and sincerely engage in right living practices and spiritual growth procedures in order to quickly accomplish their purposes for being here. Everyone who sincerely wants to wake up can do so. Be awake to the truth of your Self. Be awake in God.

Addendum

Our Responsibilities as Kriya Yoga Initiates

It is an occasion of rare good fortune when a seeker of higher knowledge goes beyond the stage of aspiring to spiritual growth and is provided the opportunity to be initiated into Kriya Yoga practices. Because so many people thirst after higher knowledge and only a few find entry to its realm, to be initiated is surely obvious evidence of God's redemptive grace. Initiation is not the end of the journey; it is only our beginning on the discipleship path that, if lived wisely and diligently, culminates in enlightenment.

As initiates, along with our responsibility to ourselves to do our utmost to unfold our innate qualities, we have a moral and spiritual responsibility to share this knowledge of soul freedom with other receptive souls. Note the word *receptive*—we should not attempt to share these teachings and methods with people who are disinterested or who are not willing to dedicate themselves to study and practice. To endeavor to do so is a misuse of our time and energy and serves no useful purpose. Share information and literature about this teaching with others who are sincerely interested, intelligent enough to understand it, and capable of applying the principles and procedures. People who are only casually interested can be given *Truth Journal* or any of our printed materials published for general distribution. Outreach is secondary to our primary agenda of living with conscious intention to facilitate our own spiritual unfoldment. Unless we are anchored in the teachings and practices of Kriya Yoga, our attempts to reach out to others, even with good intentions, will be devoid of spiritual influence and ultimately of little value.

It was for this reason that Lahiri Mahasaya, over a century ago, forbade his initiated disciples to talk about their initiation and the teachings. He emphasized practice that would transform their lives. Then, when friends and associates who noticed the obvious changes in the disciples and inquired about the reason, they were permitted to refer interested persons to Lahiri Mahasaya. Sri Yukteswar likewise advised initiated disciples to adhere to their private practices but was more involved in public spreading of the teachings. He con-

ducted discussion groups and traveled to various cities and villages, mostly in Bengal, to meet with devotees. Paramahansa Yogananda's mission was to teach more openly, offering public lectures and classes and initiating persons who were interested in learning the advanced meditation procedures.

Everyone who is interested in learning about Kriya Yoga should have an opportunity to learn the philosophical principles and basic practices; dedicated truth seekers can be offered more intensive studies and procedures. One who desires to be initiated should be taught that initiation is "a new beginning," an occasion for renouncing former self-centered behaviors and adopting a soul-directed lifestyle.

When thinking about relationships, projects, or activities, an initiate should think, "What is best for my spiritual welfare and the spiritual welfare of others?", rather than being motivated by whims, sensual urges, or traditional, conditioned ways of thinking and behaving. Initiates should be conscious, rational, and intentional in their actions. They should endeavor to perfect their behaviors in accord with the *yamas* and *niyamas* of yoga practice (see the chapter "The Practice of Kriya Yoga" in the *Yoga Sutras* commentary in *Life Surrendered in God*). Selections of the *Yoga Sutras* and *Bhagavad Gita* should be regularly read.

A practical way for Kriya Yoga initiates to share with others is to financially support the guru's ministry, if such an activity is in progress. Some gurus who are not engaged in organized endeavors advise their disciples to financially support worthwhile charitable activities as a way of expressing care for others. Paramahansa Yogananda used to say, "While you are swimming [engaging in spiritual practices and learning to be God-conscious], you should help others learn to swim." Giving a portion of our time and resources for the well-being and spiritual education of others who aspire to self-improvement and spiritual growth is our moral and spiritual duty. Conscious, willing, purposeful giving makes our lives meaningful because we are then doing something of real value instead of merely endeavoring to survive or to satisfy our egocentric inclinations.

How much money should one give for the purpose of sharing knowledge and encouraging others on the spiritual path? We can answer this question for ourselves by asking, "How important is it that I help to make possible the spiritual education of others?" If we are sincerely interested in our own enlightenment and the enlight-

enment of all souls who are in need of awakening from ignorance (there are billions of them), it should be very clear to us that we have an obligation to be agents through which higher knowledge and spiritual forces freely flow. The next question to ask is, "What will I *immediately*, *selflessly*, and *persistently* do about it?"

Immediate action is necessary—to avoid procrastination and laziness. *Selflessness is necessary*—to enable us to remain God-centered and beyond the influence of the delusions and erratic behaviors sometimes encountered when relating to people in conditioned states of consciousness. *Persistence is necessary*—to support our resolve and to get the job done.

Our Current Outreach Projects

While routine ministry activities continue, new projects are in progress to more effectively serve the needs of devotees of God.

- In the September-October issue of *Truth Journal* I announced the plan to have at least 1000 meditation groups active and flourishing by the beginning of the next century, just a few years from now. If you want to participate in this project, please contact me for specific information about how to proceed.
- Among our membership of Kriya Yoga initiates there are some who can be trained to be initiators. For the perpetuation of this ministry and the enlightenment of souls, we must have many Kriya Yoga initiators available in every region of the planet.
- I am currently planning a book in which to concisely present the basic philosophy and practices we emphasize. This completed work may also include an audio cassette album and a set of video cassettes. My idea is to clearly communicate the message so that it is accessible to everyone who sincerely wants to learn, practice, and awaken to their full spiritual potential. Progress on this project will be announced over the next few months.